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The Bruce Lectureship

THE purpose of this Lectureship is to promote the study of the New Testament among those who have passed through the usual theological curriculum in the Glasgow College of the Free Church of Scotland or the United Free Church of Scotland.

All students of Alexander Balmain Bruce, both those who can recall his voice and face and that far larger number who know him only through his books, will rejoice rather in the unofficial purpose of the Lectureship, which is to provide a fitting memorial of one who was so sincere and true and strong. Professor Bruce was not only a pioneer in New Testament study; he was a stalwart in Christian apologetic, and there are not a few who owe the recovery of their faith, under the hand of God, to his resolute guidance. Having won his own faith after a hard struggle, he helped many another to victory.

THE CREATIVE WORK OF JESUS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE CHURCH AND THE CREEDS

THE
CREATIVE WORK
OF JESUS

BRUCE LECTURES

BY
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TO MY
TWO SISTERS

Preface

My aim in this book is to restate the organic connection between Christian experience and what I take to be the core of the Christian religion—the death and resurrection of our Lord, regarded as a single, indissoluble, historical fact. The interest is concentrated inevitably upon the Cross of Christ.

In Chapter III there is a preliminary interpretation of the work of Christ. There His Cross is represented as His victory, on the plane of history, over the evil power which ravages the life of man. So far, it is assumed that His Action and Passion were required by the Will of God. The argument therefore leads on to a fuller interpretation in Chapter VII, where I have made an attempt to show that this supreme requirement of the Will of God is in full accord with the redemptive lines on which man's universe is built. I can only hope that my attempt is not without some gleam of light.

I have avoided all discussion of the great historic theories of the Atonement in the desire to make some positive contribution, however small, to the thinking which has gathered round this central and

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matchless theme. But I am debtor to them all and to many authorities whom I have not even named. Not least I am indebted to my old teacher and friend, the late Alexander Balmain Bruce, under the auspices of whose Trust I have had the honour of delivering the lectures which form the nucleus of this book.

The *Bruce Lectures* appear in the last four chapters, in the form in which they were delivered to students of the Glasgow United Free Church College. Most cordially do I thank those whose generous thought of me appointed me to this Lectureship.

DANIEL LAMONT.

Helensburgh,
December, 1924.

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CHAPTER I

The Fact of Christian Experience

CHRISTIAN experience varies over so wide a range, and the claims made in its name seem so often to compete with each other, that we are challenged to say whether it is legitimate to assume Christian experience as *a fact*. One has only to put John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* alongside Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation* to be assured that Christian experience can be treated from very different standpoints and that the experience itself varies with the standpoint. Yet these are among the most popular religious classics of Christendom, and by common consent they are both great expositions of Christian experience. The title of this chapter can only be justified by the conviction that, underlying these two books, and underlying all varieties of experience which have a sound claim to be deemed Christian, there is one firm and living foundation. That there is such a foundation is what here must be maintained at the outset. It is the experience which flows from a vital union with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself up for us. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."^x

^x 1 Cor. iii. 11.

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It goes without saying that reflection on Christian experience is subsequent to the experience itself. It must proceed from the experience like water from a perennial spring. Apart from the spring it may be logical but it cannot be living. The spring is life, "the life which is life indeed," and the doctrine which keeps issuing from that source can never become like a stagnant pool. It is true that Christian experience, as soon as it emerges, already implies activity on the part of the intelligence, and that we are thus involved in one of those circles which seem inseparable from attempts to interpret the ultimate things. But we may take heart from the consideration that thought and experience belong together. Thought is an inalienable element in Christian experience, and as the experience comes it provides ever new material for the process of reflection.

When we are reminded that experience, being only subjective after all, is too unsubstantial a foundation on which to build the edifice of truth, it is sufficient to reply that the experience of which we are thinking does not rest on air. It is itself grounded ultimately on God who is the Alpha and the Omega, from whom and to whom are all things. There is no question here as to where the foundation of truth is to be sought. The only question is as to the place which is to be assigned to Christian experience in the realm of truth, and our answer is

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that it is bound to be *at the foundation*. The God upon whom our minds ultimately rest is One who is experienced by us. He has chosen to be revealed in Jesus, of whom we must have an adequate experience if we are to have an adequate experience of God. Christian theology can be deduced from Christian experience in the same sense in which the contents of salvation can be deduced from faith. As faith implies its appropriate object, experience implies its appropriate source. When we say that faith regenerates, we mean that God regenerates us through our faith, and similarly when we say that experience is the spring from which Christian thinking emerges, we mean that God provides that spring. For us human beings, who cannot comprehend the Absolute, reality and value are inextricably interwoven, and it is sufficient to affirm here that Christian experience, looking towards its source, is our supreme material for the structure of Christian truth.

Anyone who would speak helpfully about Christian doctrine had better begin by declaring how he conceives the norm of Christian experience. The key to his conception of it must be provided by his own experience, but it does not follow that he is not to take account of experience beyond his own. He is not at liberty to assume that his faith has appropriated all that is at its disposal, or that the experience of another is not valid because he

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does not share it. In his own life he has the key for appreciating a wider, and probably a deeper, experience than his own. He must interrogate the life of the Church through the ages, and he must scrutinise the life whose pulse beats in the New Testament. He must make up his mind as to what is *normal* Christian experience, not in the sense of what is *average*, but in the sense of what is *distinctive*. It has to be admitted that interpreters differ even at this critical point, but that is all the stronger reason why one should state in clear outline what is the kind of experience which he takes for granted when he speaks of the Christian life.

The Christian experience which is assumed in this book is that to which abundant and compelling witness is borne in the New Testament. It is there described and illustrated in many different ways, so that its features are unmistakable. Any description of it which is true to the proportion of the New Testament must begin with its deep and constant undertone—faith. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”¹ There is no Christian experience apart from faith on Jesus. At the earliest dawn of the new life, faith has played its indispensable part, and it is still there at the full blaze of noon. It is sometimes represented as the great pre-requisite of Christian experience, but it is truer to think of it as belonging to the experience

¹ Acts xvi. 31.

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itself. "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit."¹ When one begins to repose his faith on Jesus, he proves himself to be already the recipient of saving grace. He could have no such faith apart from the operation of the Spirit in his spirit, but it is none the less his own personal act, the expression of his true personality. A man's faith is his own and it is of God. One can do nothing higher than have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is God's characteristic work in us to generate that faith.

The word *faith* has various shades of meaning even within the New Testament, but the living core of faith does not vary. It is always a simple, childlike trust in God or in Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels it is with this aspect of faith that Jesus is concerned. When He likens it to "a grain of mustard-seed,"² He suggests that its potency depends upon the vitality of its nucleus. Perhaps He also suggests that, as the mustard-seed may grow to be a great herb, so faith may grow from its simple nucleus into a mighty organism. In any case, it is made plain enough here and elsewhere that the principal thing about faith is its quality. A childlike trust in God is that which gives faith its character and therefore its power. Faith may seem to develop through being continuously informed,

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

² Matt. xvii. 20; Lk. xvii. 6.

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but if at any point it loses its simplicity of trust, it ceases to be faith. It is never forbidden to develop, but it is warned against losing its proper savour. It was to the true quality of faith that Jesus exhorted men in the days of His flesh, for all things were possible to the faith which was upon the right lines.

We are told how Jesus marvelled¹ at the faith of a Roman officer. This centurion had been attracted by the religion of Israel, had undoubtedly read its Scriptures, and had brought a clearer eye to the reading of them than the average Israelite could bring. For their veil of traditions was not upon his face. As a consequence his faith in God was of a childlike character, such as Jesus had not found in Israel. This faith of his, moreover, led him to a pre-eminently worthy recognition of Jesus, for he believed Him to have the power to heal his sick servant from the distance. Jesus wondered at such a faith appearing in so unlikely a quarter. It was not that it was a full-orbed faith. His knowledge of Jesus must have been in many respects less enlightened than that of those who had been much with the Master. Like them he knew nothing as yet of the redemptive work which Jesus was to accomplish for men. And yet the great encomium was passed upon his faith. It was because he trusted with transparent simplicity in the compassion

¹ Matt. viii. 10; Lk. vii. 9.

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and power of Jesus towards a human being who was in trouble. Such a faith was as rare as it was efficacious, and it pleased Jesus well. This man, with his comparatively meagre opportunities, had risen to a notable faith through not hindering the Spirit in His work of producing it.

The living core of faith does not appear in the soul without a history behind it. That history is the interplay of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit. The effort of the Holy Spirit is towards the production of faith, and a situation favourable to faith is produced in every soul which responds to that effort. The proclamation of the Gospel is a requisite condition to the production of faith itself, which means that the Spirit requires the Church as His instrument. But it is He who has created and who inspires the Church, and He is not to be regarded as being idle in those fields where the Church, for any reason, has failed to accept its appointed task. That is why we have said that, wherever a soul gives the right response to the Spirit's initiative with it, a situation favourable to faith is there produced. The personal trust which is the core of faith must be simple, but it does not follow that it is easy. It is natural when the favouring conditions are present, impossible when they are not. One who trusts Christ very simply may seem, to one who cannot do so, to be a special favourite of heaven, or he may seem to be a very

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credulous type of person. There are those who think that because they lack the core of faith now, they have been predestined not to have it. In their own way of putting it, they have not been "built that way." Others take for granted that it is their own intellectual superiority which makes it impossible for them to trust God so simply as "those naïve souls" do. In both cases you seem to see men, entrenched strongly enough already against the overtures of the Spirit, laying down their barbed wire entanglements to make their defence doubly sure.

A childlike trust in God has a *natural* history behind it. We all had to trust someone before we knew anything at all. Instinctive confidence in a power beyond ourselves was a gift to each one of us at the start. If we had been philosophers from birth, the race could hardly have survived. At no other point of nature is so ample a trust called for, either in duration or depth, as in the human babe. That fact is eloquent of many things. It means this at least, that as the evolutionary series progresses, trust becomes an increasing necessity. What a topsy-turvydom of thought it is to feel intellectually superior to that which the nature of things has brought to us in ever growing volume! Well, thanks be to God, we were all naïve at one time. This was a favourite thought with Jesus. As He looked upon the life around Him, He saw that men

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had well-nigh lost, or entirely lost, the one thing which they ought to have carried forward from childhood, and He summoned them to become again like little children. He saw that they had retained the self-assertion and petulance and peevishness of "children sitting in the markets"¹ and had shed that confiding trust which was the child's glory. "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."² Happy is he whose early trust in his mother passes as quietly into a perfect trust in his Heavenly Father as the dawn moves on to the day.

A childlike trust in God has also a *spiritual* history behind it. We are members one of another, and the growth of the child-mind is dependent upon parents, home, society, Church. There is no automatic machinery by which the babe's unconscious trust in his mother can be made to pass into the man's conscious trust in God. The Holy Spirit is at work in the growing spirit, but He calls for the co-operation of those spiritual forces which He Himself has set in motion in the human environment. The soul must be interested and nurtured in spiritual reality if the field is to be prepared for the production of the harvest of faith. The whole soul tends to move in the direction of that in which it is most interested. It is astonishing what capacities even a dull boy may develop, once

¹ Matt. xi. 16.

² Matt. xviii. 3.

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his attention is absorbed by some particular interest in life. God is the supreme interest in every human life, whether the fact is recognised or not, and it would be a strange thing if there were no means by which God can be made interesting to a boy or to anyone else. The means are at hand, but they need to be furbished and utilised. A social atmosphere of faith is the great means of arousing men's attention to spiritual reality, and it is this atmosphere that the Church is intended to provide.

An analysis of that simple trust which is the core of faith would reveal *spiritual attention* as one of its constituent elements. Trust in God does not exist where there is no eagerness towards God. The mind must be at the alert. Desire and will must be absorbed in the great quest. The Psalms abound in this mood of longing after God, seeking Him, waiting patiently for Him. Such spiritual attention, like any other kind of attention which is desirable, needs to be cultivated. The best time for its cultivation is in childhood, before the soul-destroying forces of this world have had the chance to work their mischief. The misery is that with most men the world has had the first innings and so God seems remote and even unreal. In that case the power of spiritual attention can only be won through an experience of much pain. God needs to knock loudly if the sleeping soul is to be aroused.

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The rusty locks and hinges are stiff and unyielding, and the opening of the heart's door is a desperate operation. But it is better late than never. Despair is often the handmaid to attention, and attention is handmaid to trust.

Keeping in mind these general considerations as to the genesis and essence of faith, we can now see that the growth of faith in the soul is a process which dovetails at every point with Christian experience. Faith belongs to the experience as its ground, a ground, moreover, which is not purely subjective, for it is the groundwork of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The story of faith and the story of Christian experience are really one. This unity is not suggested by "the mystic ladder" of purgation, illumination and consummation, by which mysticism invites the soul to rise to the highest rung of spiritual experience. "The mystic ladder" is therefore not the authentic story of Christian experience. "The pilgrim way" of repentance, regeneration and sanctification, by suggesting the necessity for faith, and therefore for the operation of the Spirit, at every step of the way from first to last, preserves the proportion of the New Testament and is a truer description of the Christian life. It serves our present purpose better, however, to deduce Christian experience from faith, regarded in its threefold aspect of surrender, gift and task.

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A. THE SURRENDER.

The Christian experience is, in the first instance, a surrender. It is a dying to self. Nothing is to be gained here, or in dealing with any other aspect of the experience, by seeking to apportion what is of our own initiative and what is of the Spirit. The broad fact is that at every point the human personality is fully engaged, while the Spirit is always the Great Worker. A man who enters the Christian life must do so through the gate of surrender, but we must beware of being misled by a metaphor. He does not leave this gate behind him as he passes on. Surrender is not an act which is past and done with at the start. It is a process which, no doubt, has special significance and consequence at the start, but which must be sustained, alike in mood and in action, all the way through. It must be more than sustained; it must be continuously deepened and informed. It is always an expression of the will, given at the dictate of intelligence and the urge of emotion, but at the first there can be little recognition of what it is to involve in detail as life goes on. There is a conscious break with the past, but the future is only a wonder and a desire. Its meaning is unfolded in its ceaseless exercise in contact with all the circumstances of life. The morning surrender must become more and more explicit till the day is at an end.

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Humility is thus the indispensable atmosphere of Christian experience. The threshold of the Kingdom of Heaven is too low to admit anyone who will not stoop, and pride cannot breathe its air. Each in his own way has to learn that he cannot save himself, before he recognises that only God can save him. The surrender which has faith-value is a surrender of the will in its totality. The man who has been lowest down, once he has been lifted up, has often the plainest testimony to give to the power of Christ. It is because, in the cataclysm attending his new birth, there is no room for mistake as to the completeness of his self-despair. He knows that he was down and out, and that it was only when he died to self that he began to live in Another. His surrender was thoroughgoing and passionate, and, though pride has subtle ways of returning, he cannot easily forget that it was a power other than his own that lifted him out of the mire. Those who have entered the City by one of the south gates may have surrendered their wills so quietly and gradually as hardly to have noticed that it was a surrender at all. The difference that Christ has made to them is not picturable in black and white. There is nothing dramatic about the change. But they, too, may have their testimony, and they always have it when, with humble hearts, they enter progressively into the joy of their Lord.

Surrender is bound to be shallow and partial

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where it is not accompanied by repentance. Until a man knows himself to be a sinner, he is unaware of the real tragedy of his life and unable to make an intelligent surrender. The Cross of Christ means nothing to him so long as he does not in some measure see himself out of the Saviour's eyes, and the man to whom that Cross means nothing knows little either of himself or of God. Missionaries, especially in the East, tell us that it is normal for their converts to be for years in the Christian Church before they develop a sense of sin. The Chinese seem to be attracted to the Church first of all by those things which belong to the fringe rather than to the core of Christianity. But it is also normal for conscience to make its appearance, it may be after a long time, and then repentance may be profound. Perhaps it is best to think of them, before the awakening of conscience, as undergoing their moral preparation, like children who may have a real relation to Christ before they have anything that can be called a sense of sin. But this does not affect the conviction that surrender is only in the making until there is true repentance towards God. When Jesus, at the beginning of His ministry, called men to "repent and believe in the glad tidings,"¹ He was not simply adding His own distinctive message to that of the Baptist. He was declaring that true repentance was an essential element in faith, and that it could

¹ Mk. i. 15.

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not come without faith. Repentance is the very breath of surrender.

The faith-value of surrender resides in its being a surrender to Christ. Surrender is in itself non-moral. Its moral content is determined by the object to which it is made. It may even become immoral and degrading, as when it is made to the ambition to be rich. It is fatally easy to surrender to an idol. Mediæval piety was strong in the virtues flowing from resignation, but it was not fully alive to the perils of resignation. It counted surrender to a director a spiritual necessity, discouraged all criticism of the masters and the saints, and despised the freedom of the mind. Freedom has its risks, but so also has surrender. To surrender even to a good man, while it may deliver one from many vulgarities, is yet to incur inevitable detriment to mind and character. It is a comparative blessing to people who would otherwise acknowledge no authority, but it is a second best which effectively shuts people out from the best. No man can with impunity surrender his soul to anything short of the Highest. There is but one God, and the soul which surrenders itself to any man is worshipping an idol. The risks, alike of freedom and surrender, are vanquished by faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and in no other way. The slave of Christ is the only freeman.

The surrender which is made to Christ must be

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as complete as we know how to make it, or it is nothing at all. Anything consciously kept back mars everything. As the plough turns over the soil of life, we are often surprised by the discovery of things within us which we have kept back unconsciously, and so we are called to an ever deeper and fuller surrender. All that is in self, good, bad and indifferent, must be handed over. It may reasonably be asked how it is possible to surrender the bad self. If an evil habit, for instance, can be exorcised by mere surrender, it would then seem that we can save ourselves. But can we? The answer is twofold: first, that the word *mere* should be omitted from the question, for the surrender is made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that the man, while playing his own part in it, can in no case suppose that he is saving himself; second, that a man may sincerely surrender his will to Christ and yet be called to fight a hard battle against his evil habits. The power of sin may vex him for a while and even get the better of him at times, but as he keeps in the path of surrender, he moves in the right direction and he will triumph yet.

Another kind of person may ask why he should be required to surrender what is obviously good in his life. There is his love of his child, for example; surely it was never intended that he should surrender that. But it is intended so, for he can do nothing better, either for himself or for his child, than to

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hand over his natural affection, good as it is, to Him who said : " Suffer the little children to come unto Me."¹ If we do not trust Christ to hallow and ennoble all that is already pure and true in human life, we do not trust Him at all. He makes a difference even to what is naturally good, for He makes all things new. We speak of darling sins which keep men out of the Kingdom, but there are darling virtues which may keep them out as effectively. The man who was " not far from the Kingdom of God "² was yet not in it. This may seem hard doctrine, but it is the inexorable affirmation of the Gospel. One who would come after Christ must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Him. If he has really seen Christ, he is constrained to give up to Him all that he has and is. Christ claims all. He asks no more and He will take no less.

The surrender to Christ of all that is in one's life must not be identified with an indiscriminate flight from the world. This identification is the bane of the mediæval ideal of the religious life. Monasticism served a good purpose in recalling a worldly Church to the essential inwardness of true religion, but it was bound to overbalance itself and add a new kind of evil to those which it was meant to cure. For it failed to recognise two fundamental and closely-related principles : first, that nature,

¹ Mk. x. 14.

² Mk. xii. 34.

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hallowed by grace, has a redemptive element which is meant for the well-being of the soul ; and second, that the Christian life is meant to purify the world-stream by witnessing for Christ in the midst of it. Retreat has a necessary place in the Christian life, but to make life itself a retreat is to miss the real genius of the religion of Christ. Flight from the world makes fight with the inward foe all the harder, and that is not the line along which Christ calls us to victory. The hectic quality of monastic piety is manifest in Kempis' *Imitation*, that fairest literary fruit of monasticism. "To eat and to drink, to sleep and to wake, to labour and to rest, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, is truly a great misery and affliction to a religious man."¹ Here we are very far away from the mood of those early disciples who "did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart."² The renunciation which has faith-value is neither a casting down nor a destroying, neither an indiscriminate flight nor any private decision of ours as to the things to be eschewed, but the handing over of our whole life to Christ that He may settle our interests and habits, our character and destiny. Here alone is the freedom of a Christian man, wherein let him stand fast.

Once more be it remembered that freedom is attended with peril. Monasticism takes a high place

¹ *Imitation*, I., 22.

² Acts ii. 46.

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in history if it helps to remind us that we cannot give to the world that which we have not got. If the sphere of the Christian is out amid the world's dust and din, as it undoubtedly is, it is clear that we cannot do the world any good if we are exactly like itself. We must come in upon it from another world, if we are to be co-workers with the Redeemer of men, and that other world can only become our native air when we court it much in solitude.

"He that would win must first be overcome ;
He that would fight abroad must firstly die at home."

The man who asks what is the least he can give up in order to be a Christian is one who has not yet had a first glimpse of what Christianity is. The only mood which befits the follower of Christ is that which counts the whole world well lost for Christ's sake. It is an uncalculating mood. Once it has counted the cost and resolved to meet it, it is done with the prudential and bargaining spirit. It has taken Christ for its Lord and it can trust Him to make all things fit into their true place in life. "All are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's."¹

B. THE GIFT.

To him who makes the great surrender there comes the gift of God which is "eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."² Paul is fond of representing

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

² Rom. vi. 23.

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it as a being "raised together with Christ."¹ To him the measure of God's power for the redemption of men is the power which raised Jesus from the dead. It is that same power which gives life to those who are dead² in sins. It was natural for him in this connection to use the metaphor of rising with Christ, and it can hardly be maintained that the figure is too strong for the fact. It is not stronger than "a new creation"³ in Christ Jesus, and not so strong as "Ye must be born anew."⁴ There is no need to apologise for believing that life comes by the way of self-renunciation. How deeply this principle enters into the nature of things is being recognised more clearly on every hand. That God can give of His best only when a man is in an attitude of entire self-surrender to Him, is not one of the ideas which the modern mind need have difficulty in accepting. At all events, it is the core of Christian experience, that he who gives up all to Christ finds all in Christ.

The gift of God is broadly described as life, and no effort is spared to unfold the content of that word. The writers of the New Testament give such eager and abundant testimony to it that it is hard to imagine anything that they may have left unsaid. It is faith working by love ; it is the harvest of the Spirit ; it is a growing likeness to Christ ; it is so

¹ Col. iii. 1.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

² Eph. ii. 1.

⁴ Jn. iii. 7.

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wonderful that you dare not set any limit to the worth and wealth of it, and even so, it is but the pledge and promise of something inconceivably glorious that is yet to be ; it is more than victorious over all the ills that can vex us, including sin and death, and it lifts life up to levels which put the fairest dreams to shame. And when they have said all this and far more about it, they confess that it defies description. It is "the life which is life indeed."¹ The riches of Christ are unsearchable.

There are two things in the gift of God which are made to stand out in bold relief. One is the forgiveness of sins, and the other, the redemption of the body. Faith and repentance are already the gift of God, but man makes a contribution of his own to them. Forgiveness is wholly and freely the gift of God, the first gift to be appropriated by faith. It is the climate in which the new life grows and blossoms and bears fruit. Until a man is received into this climate, he must remain a stranger to the new life. He who believes and repents receives full and free forgiveness, and then all things are possible to him. It ought not to be alleged that Paul was the originator of this emphasis upon forgiveness. That we all need to become debtors to God concerning our sins must be a presupposition in ethical and redemptive religion, and it pervades the Old Testament as well as the New. It is the

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 19.

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deepest thing in Christian experience. To have passed through the crisis of conviction of sin into the bewildering sense of forgiveness is to know the exceeding greatness of the power of Christ. The joy of passing thus from death to life is often so intense as to mislead the convert into a false complacency. He may think that he has reached the goal of life instead of only entering in at the gate, and in that case trouble is in store for him. But if he is wise and humble enough to start upon his journey with the same faith that first brought him to his Saviour, he will never doubt the power which brought him out of darkness into light, and he will keep passing into fuller light.

The redemption of the body is the culmination of eternal life in Christ Jesus. Here we are dealing with something which cannot, in the nature of things, be fully experienced on this side, but the hope of it is an essential part of Christian experience. It is not the vague hope which springs from an optimistic temper, but the well-grounded hope which grows in the soil of faith. Its twofold root is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the surrender of our bodies to Him. Even now the body shares in the process of redemption, through the power of the Holy Spirit, but it can only come to the end of the process beyond this present order.

Nowhere does the Christian hope find more revealing expression than in that New Testament

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letter which has assurance for its theme. There it is said : " We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."¹ These words are peculiarly rich as coming from one who had seen Jesus as He *was*, both in the days of His flesh and after He was raised from the dead. This old Apostle not only hopes, he *knows*, that he will see his Lord as He *is*, in the glory of the Father. For not only had he the promise of his Lord, but he was also aware that his own eyes were better prepared to see Him. It was a certain likeness to Jesus that led to his recognition of Him long ago, and it was only to eyes opened by faith and love that the Risen Lord had appeared. Like is recognised by like, and he argues from the certainty of seeing Jesus as He is to the certainty of being like Him. It is no straining of his words to feel in them a wistful longing to see his Lord again, a kind of homesickness like that which came over *Christian* in the *Land of Beulah*. It is like the longing for a loved one who is pledged to return from overseas. When he meets his Lord there will be no need of introduction, and no doubt he will be like Him. It is the play of the Apostle's heart around the promise of Jesus : " Because I live, ye shall live also."²

Eternal life is the gift of God, but none the less does it unfold itself in conformity with psychological law. Accompanying every phase of Christian experience, like the turning of a flower's

¹ 1 Jn. iii. 2.

² Jn. xiv. 19.

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petals to the sun, is the soul's sense of indebtedness to Christ. A passionate gratitude to Him is the glow of faith, and it is only when faith glows that the iron of life becomes malleable to the hand of Christ. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much,"¹ He said of the woman in the city, meaning that her abundant gratitude proved that she was forgiven. "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace,"² was His parting word to her, implying that faith which glowed in a gratitude like hers had saving power. When Paul gives us his chain of Christian graces: "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, character; and character, hope; and hope, fruition,"³ he links all to the sense of God's love in the heart and makes it plain that this sense of love is itself the gift of God. It is the Spirit that gives us our feeling of indebtedness to Christ, and that feeling is the deep secret of Christian devotion. "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."⁴ Gratitude to Christ is of the very essence of Christian experience.

C. THE TASK.

It belongs to the gift of God that it imposes upon a man his life's task. God does not spoil His children, and His gift to them is one which,

¹ Lk. vii. 47.

² Lk. vii. 50.

³ Rom. v. 3-5.

⁴ Gal. ii. 20.

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by its very nature, starts them upon their vocation and keeps them in it. The thing which is of value in any gift is the life which is in it, so that life is really the only gift which is worth giving or getting. We help a man by helping him truly to live. The recognition of this principle disposes of all fear that the Gospel, if accepted, would demoralise human beings by robbing them of the need and incentive to strive. The gift of God is often spoken of in the Bible as an inheritance, but it is an inheritance to be entered into progressively and with just that kind of effort which promotes health. There is effort and effort. There is, in the spiritual realm at least, a kind of effort which, when it is quite honest, issues in despair. It is the kind which made Paul, thinking of his early days, cry: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"¹ But the effort which is inspired and sustained by the faith of which the New Testament speaks, has the assurance of victory from the start. It is "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"² that bears a man onward from strength to strength. Nothing could be further from the mark than to say that this removes faith from the place given to it in the Gospel according to Paul. The faith which gets so central a place in the New Testament never absolves a man from effort; it awakens effort and gives it direction and success.

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

² Rom. viii. 2.

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It is not to be denied that sometimes, in their jealousy for faith as the sole means of appropriation of the gift of God, evangelical thinkers have laid themselves open to the charge of leaving no room for moral effort in the Christian life. But their timidity is no reflection of anything which is in the New Testament. There the boldness which gives faith an incomparable place in the acceptance of salvation is matched by the thoroughness with which faith is associated with the effort to achieve the good life. Both sides of the truth are affirmed so strongly that each may seem at times to rob the other of its full force. But there is no evidence that the New Testament writers had any difficulty in holding the two sides together. The Spirit with which faith brought them into contact was the Spirit of life who, far from submerging personality, raised it to its highest level of effort and achievement. That the Spirit is the Great Worker in the life of the Christian provides the very motive of Christian effort. "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God that worketh in you."¹ The gift of God sets the Christian his task, inspires him to ply it faithfully, and gives him both the mood and the crown of victory.

The life which is the gift of God is always bestowed in conformity with the conditions which govern human life in general. A man can live only

¹ Philip. ii. 12, 13.

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a moment at a time, and every moment, although rooted in the sum of all preceding ones, brings a new experience with it. He has not travelled this way before. Material for surprise is constantly emerging. At some supreme moment he may have surrendered himself to the Will of God, but as he can only learn what that perfect Will is for him as he goes along, he is required to make frequent, and it may be painful, surrenders in detail as he passes on his life's road. His initial surrender to God must be applied to the unfolding situations of each day. It has to be endorsed many a time at the bank of life, and the gift of God, which is life eternal, is available to faith at each endorsement.

The task set by God's gift to its recipient is adequately described as the task of faith. Any description of Christian experience which seems to make the strenuous cultivation of the inner life superfluous must lack something which is vital. That the water of life is abundant and free does not absolve us from the necessity of drawing from the wells. The process of drawing may sometimes be very hard. It is extraordinary to find systems of Christian doctrine in which prayer has nothing more than a formal place. Surely prayer and self-discipline are essential to a continuous and growing Christian experience. In these days one finds abundant testimony to the necessity of service for the promotion of spiritual life. It is true that

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we get as we give, but it is equally true that we give as we get. God's gift constrains us to our whole task, and that task, while it takes the whole world for its sphere, centres around the maintenance and promotion of our own spiritual life. The charge of selfishness which is frequently brought against concern for one's own salvation may be a useful protest against morbid forms of the religious life, but in so far as it belittles the task of working out one's own salvation it is sheer vacuity. No one can give what he has not got. The true ministry of life can be carried on only by him who has somewhat to minister, and the life which we have to pass on to others must be continuously appropriated by us, even if it can only be so in toil and tears. It is often assumed that our Lord's command to us to take up our cross has its primary reference to service. Manifestly its first reference is to an inward experience. It is in its lonely commerce with God, and there only, that the soul can learn how to take up its cross, but when it has learned its lesson there, it can follow Christ anywhere.

Finally, he who receives the gift of God is, by that reception, set the task to understand. Like everything else in the harvest of the Christian life, understanding is set forth in the New Testament as part of the gift of God. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an

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understanding.”¹ But it would be unlike God to give understanding to people who will not take the trouble to think. In mediæval pietism the heart was much exalted at the expense of the head, but nobody can get on very well without thinking, and the question of right thinking can never become less than important. The revolt against intellectualism in our own day has already gone far enough to call for a new defence of the charter of the mind. After all, no one can rise to the highest that he can be, without exercising his mind as well as he can, and even the criticism of intellectualism is not independent of the use of the intellectual faculty. It does not seem possible to get past the high value set by Paul on Christian understanding. Especially in his Prison Epistles, he is fond of thinking of God’s grace, whose essence is forgiveness, as overflowing to faith “in all wisdom and prudence,”² that is, in spiritual understanding and practical good sense. He has in view a spiritual sagacity which enables a man to think all things together by means of the clue afforded by the Cross of Christ. There should be no suspicion of the mind when it has caught the fragrance of holy love exhaled from the Cross.

¹ 1 Jn. v. 20.

² Eph. i. 8; Philip. i. 9.

CHAPTER II

The Source of Christian Experience

WE cannot speak of Christian experience without presupposing its source. For it is spiritual experience; it is mediated, that is to say, by faith, and faith must be conscious of its object. The object of faith, therefore, had to be assumed in the preceding chapter. Now we must reverse the shield, presupposing Christian experience and fastening attention upon its source. The source of all true spiritual experience is God. It is not mere formality that prompts Paul to insist unweariedly, in varying phrase, that "all things are of God."¹ It is noteworthy that when his adoration of Christ rises to its greatest height, it then seems most natural for him to find his climax in a doxology in which God is all and in all. It is not too much to say that he cannot think of Christ and His Gospel without associating them with their source in God. In view of this habit of his mind, it is not so wonderful as it has sometimes been felt that, out of his numerous references to the divine love, there seem to be only three² instances in which he uses the phrase "the love of Christ" rather than "the love

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18.

² Rom. viii. 35; 2 Cor. v. 14; Eph. iii. 19.

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of God." His thought of God is organic to his thought of Christ. His mind never quite comes to rest till it rests in God.

We believe that this mental attitude of Paul is the authentic Christian attitude, and we do not forget it when we say that Christ is the fount and origin of Christian experience. Our enquiry, therefore, centres at once on Him. There can be no faith in Christ without some knowledge of Him, and one condition of growing faith is growing knowledge. No immediate knowledge about Christ is possible to anyone to-day. It must be mediated to us by testimony, and an indispensable element in testimony is history. Of course, when we have listened to the testimony of history regarding Jesus, we may still be a long way from the attitude of Christian faith towards Him. Faith means knowing Him in a deeper sense than knowing about Him. But first we must know about Him. This consideration gives vital importance to the question which has been raised acutely in our time : Can we be sure that the testimony of history concerning Jesus is trustworthy ? Were we to pronounce a negative verdict, the whole enquiry into the validity and source of Christian experience would be rendered futile. The validity of Christian experience obviously depends upon the trustworthiness of the New Testament record concerning Jesus. If historical science were to prove conclusively that

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Jesus was nothing more than an apocalyptic visionary, or if it were to prove the contrary thesis that He was nothing more than an ethical teacher, it is clear that in either case what we know as historical Christianity would be revealed to be a colossal delusion and would take end at once for all reasonable people.

That we are proceeding with the enquiry into the source of Christian experience implies that we accept the trustworthiness of the apostolic testimony to Jesus. We assume the critical position, which we hold to be unshaken, that the New Testament reveals a unity which can only be explained by the singleness of the impression made by the historical Jesus on the lives of those whom He trained to be His witnesses. A generation ago those who assailed this position used as their favourite weapon the assertion that there is an impassable gulf between the Jesus of the Gospels, especially of the Synoptic Gospels, and the Christ of the Pauline Epistles. That weapon has now been laid aside for another. We are assailed by the assertion that all the four Gospels have been so marred by the Pauline influence as to have become, in the form in which they have been handed down to us, unreliable records of the historical Jesus. It is sufficient for our present purpose to allow those two weapons to deal with one another. The study of the attempts which have been made to reveal a kind of geological

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fault running athwart the Gospel may well confirm one in the conviction that we have in the New Testament a portrait of Jesus which is single, self-attesting, challenging, appealing. The very differences add to the wealth and impressiveness of the unity of the picture. People who find contradictory pictures of Jesus in the New Testament are certainly not the people to give us the true picture of Him to-day.

Experience of any kind is itself an historical fact. The experience of the Buddha was of one sort ; that of Paul was of another sort ; but both were historical facts which, moreover, have powerfully affected the history of mankind. Looking at the two experiences by themselves, we would seem to be confronted by the question of comparative value. We have to settle in our own minds which of the historical facts is the more valuable to ourselves and to the human race. If individual taste were the final arbiter, there would be nothing more to say on the matter. The Buddha's experience would appeal to one man, and Paul's to another. But taste depends upon a number of things which are historical as well as subjective, and if it is to be final arbiter we should require to be certain that it has been educated in such a way as to prepare it to make a worthy decision. Looked at from any point of view, the ultimate ground of our decision is not taste, but truth. We may feel

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disposed to echo Pilate's impatient question : " What is truth ? " ¹ but if the truth about God and man is for ever beyond our reach, the only permissible affirmation about anything is that life is not worth while.

It is true that all experience is of the nature of historical fact, but Christian experience authenticates itself as experience of pre-eminent value, not only by the intrinsic worth of the experience itself, but also by its claim to be derived from a source whose reality and character are vouched for by history. Faith has for its object One who is at least as real as anything in history can be. The historical facts of Christian experience rest upon another historical fact which is wholly worthy to be their foundation. It is the fact of Jesus, in His life, death and resurrection. This is not a case of seeming to solve a problem by deriving one thing from another whose derivation raises the whole problem over again. The historical Jesus was not the first Christian ; He was and is the Foundation upon whom Christianity rests. In Him we have an historical fact which is continuous and consonant with the facts of Christian experience, but which is far more than any or all of these facts. In Him God has spoken His supreme word to men and done His supreme work for men. That is the reason why the New Testament can never be re-written. That

¹ Jn. xviii. 38.

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book is the first-hand testimony to the Jesus of history, and manifestly no one can pretend to give such testimony out of his own head to-day. That the living Word of God and the living source of Christian experience is Jesus, who once passed through this life of ours, is the heart and glory of the Christian religion. We must now look at the foundation-fact upon which so much is built, and we shall think successively of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. It is well to remember all through that it is one indivisible fact.

A. THE EARTHLY LIFE OF JESUS.

The claim of Christian faith is nothing short of this, that in the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth God gave the one perfect revelation of Himself that He has given to men. The word *revelation* must here be raised to its highest terms. Jesus was sent of God not only to show to men what God is like, but also to do on behalf of men a work of God which men could never do. "Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."¹ The names given to Jesus in the New Testament are either partial descriptions of His ideal relation to men, such as *Saviour*, *Lord*, *King*, or attempts to describe His relation to God, such as *The Son of God*, *The Only-begotten Son*, *The Messiah*, *The Word*. His

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

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favourite titles for Himself were *The Son* and *The Son of Man*, the former being the correlate of *The Father*, and the latter, of *The Kingdom of God*. Faith's claim for Jesus is even higher than any one of these great names ordinarily suggests. It is a stupendous claim. How stupendous it is, they know best who have the best right to make it.

This claim of Christian faith is confirmed wherever the eye of the soul allows itself to be filled with the glory of Christ. This cannot happen without prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. But it should go without saying that he who would see Jesus must be sufficiently interested in Him to listen attentively to the testimony of those who were nearest to Him in the days of His flesh. The New Testament must always remain the Christian classic. The true impression of Jesus is to be had, under the inspiration of the same Spirit that prompted the writers of the New Testament, from the portrait of Jesus which is given there. Not by thought-spinning over what we suppose One must have been like who was both God and man, not by speculations as to the nature of His pre-existence or the manner of His birth, not by etymological examination of the names given to Him in the New Testament, but by a resolute and reverent study of His life, does the secret of His personality break upon our view and we see in His Face the very glory of God. The character of Jesus cannot be known to us until

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we have discovered it, or rather until it has been revealed to us, in the life which He lived among men.

It is one of the most common and mischievous of errors in Christian doctrine to teach or to suppose that any man was ever meant to pledge his mind to the Divinity of Jesus before he has recognised it in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. There are many, for instance, whose whole interest in the Divinity of our Lord centres on the question of His Virgin Birth. Their attitude to Him is determined by whether or not they can accept the story of His miraculous origin. When they reject it, they have nothing more to do with Him; they let Him pass out of their lives. When they accept it, they may have as little to do with Him as they who have rejected it. Belief in His miraculous birth has absolutely no faith-value for those who have not seen His glory elsewhere. In the apostolic Gospel, it is not His birth, but His resurrection, that is employed for the purpose of authenticating His Divinity. Jesus was the "Son, who was born of David's offspring by natural descent, and installed as Son of God with power by the Spirit of holiness when He was raised from the dead."^x It is certain that Jesus Himself never used the circumstances of His birth as a means of inspiring faith, and that His apostles never put the Virgin Birth in the forefront of their message. Had they regarded it as vital

^x Rom. i. 3, 4 (Moffatt).

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to faith in Christ, could it possibly have been omitted, as it has been, in the Gospels by Mark and John, the Book of Acts, and the writings of Paul? It may be taken for granted that thousands of the early Christians were bound by faith to Christ without ever having heard the story of the Virgin Birth. It would be a strange thing if that story, however true and beautiful it may be, were now set up as a pre-requisite to faith in Christ.

When Jesus was upon the earth, He made His appeal to men, not on the grounds of His miraculous birth, but on the grounds of what He was and did and what He had come to do. It was His concern that men should see Him as He was. "Follow Me" was His favourite word to those who would see the glory of God and enter into life. His training of the Twelve sheds all the light that is required on His method of evoking faith. It was the spiritual method. It consisted of instruction, personal influence, and reliance upon the Spirit in whose power He Himself lived and moved and had His being. It was a method which made a large demand upon His patience and hopefulness and compassion, and the demand was abundantly met. He avoided all coercion of the intelligence or will of His disciples, never precipitating their moral and spiritual judgments, always waiting and working for the opening of their eyes that they might see Himself and God. He strove to win their faith by revealing

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Himself to them as One who was entirely worthy of it. The eagerness with which He watched for it is revealed both by His disappointment over its failures, as in His words to them: "Have ye no faith yet?"¹ and by His joy over its victories, as in His congratulation of Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah."² Their faith in Him could not be full-orbed while as yet He had not revealed Himself in His death and rising, but it could have the right quality of insight and trust, and He looked for that and rejoiced when He got it.

Jesus produced upon His contemporaries a universal impression of wonder. Even they who were most in His company were continually being surprised by His words and deeds. "Who then is this?"³ they said one to another, in mingled wonder and fear, when He stilled the storm on the lake. The leaders of the people, who were earliest on the field against Him, wondered at Him from the first, and as their hostility grew they still wondered. Pilate marvelled also, and so did the common people. The multitudes were amazed at the authority of His words as well as at the power of His will. That wonder of theirs was the rich material out of which sympathy and understanding and trust might have been shaped, but most of them so marred it with self-will that it turned to opposition and hatred in the end. Most of the great things in life begin

¹ Mk. iv. 40.

² Matt. xvi. 17.

³ Mk. iv. 41.

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in wonder, but misused wonder is only a curse. It is significant that Jesus evoked universal wonder. People do not wonder at one who is like themselves. They must have felt that He was very unlike other men, and they were bound either to renounce Him or draw Him very closely to their hearts.

What was it in Jesus that made people wonder when they first heard Him speak? One thing was that He spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven as naturally as He might have spoken of His native land. He spoke not only as One who had been there, but as One who *was* there while He spoke. They recognised that He belonged to another world than theirs. They listened while He called them to His world as to their own true home, and while He told them of the Father who was waiting and yearning to give them the best of welcomes. They listened, but most held back. Was it that their own world was all that they could desire? Not at all. It was that they had ideas of their own as to how their world was to be set right. In the last resort, it was man's rooted objection to God.

The people wondered at Jesus, further, because they saw that He cared for them. This was something new, though by and by they grew accustomed to it and began to trade upon it. But at first it was as startling to them as it was welcome. Here was One who took a tender and loving interest in individual men and women, people who were

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strangers to Him, all sorts and conditions of them too. The more degraded or diseased or friendless they were, the more did this Man's compassion go forth to them. And what power He had to heal and help! Anyone who was down could find Him accessible, friendly, adequate. Truly it was wonderful. They all felt it. With us the wonder rather is that it all turned out as it did. Why did they reject Him in the end? Ah, His very popularity with them hardened their hearts against Him, when He would not take their way, but kept calling them to His. We have seen the same thing many a time on a smaller scale. People who receive great kindnesses are thereby made either much better or much worse. We can understand why Jesus, just because He was so full of compassion for men, was more intent on the healing of their souls than of their bodies. He put preaching first.

Once more, people wondered at Jesus because of the majestic authority which He exhibited in a region which they had been taught to deem beyond the authority of mortal man. Why, He even took His stand, and that with perfect naturalness, above Moses. If that did not appear to be blasphemy, as it did to some, it must have been because of an impression of pre-eminent worth and power conveyed by the Personality behind it. His attitude to the law, both moral and ceremonial, was very welcome to them, but rather mysterious. The law

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was to most of them a grievous burden, and He told them that it was never meant to be so ; but the vision which He gave them of emancipation from its bondage quickly faded as they heard Him heightening rather than lowering the demands of the law. In the region of moral behaviour He was as much a rebuke to anarchy and slackness as to tyranny of any kind. Though their comprehension of the subject might be dim, they were perfectly well aware that the law was a new thing as it came from His lips. And then, most wonderful of all, He spoke of God as never man spoke. It seemed in many ways the old language, but there was a new tenderness, a new emphasis, a new power.

The wonder of the Personality of Jesus has in no way diminished except for those who have allowed custom to numb their souls or who have not looked at Him with serious eyes. We see the law, the love, the purpose, the very glory of God reflected from Him and we see them nowhere else. It is not a case of knowing beforehand what the glory of God is like and coming to the conclusion that Jesus reflects that. It is a case of looking at Jesus and having our eyes opened for the first time to what that glory is. It is through Him that we believe in God. The failure to grasp the full meaning of that New Testament truth accounts for much of the indecision of modern Christianity. Many imagine that its meaning is exhausted in the

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obvious fact that Jesus taught us to call God "our Father," and then their ground is somewhat shaken by the Philistines who remind them that Jesus was not the first to give God that name. Perhaps even more people imagine that the Christian affirmation *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, is arrived at by the process of starting with a fully-formed conception of God and measuring Jesus by the standard of that conception. The religion of the New Testament is not recognisable in such a process. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can only be seen by those who see Jesus. We *come to* the Christian knowledge of God and the Christian faith in God through taking in the full impression of Jesus and casting our faith on Him. "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."¹ To reckon Jesus as a teacher who, having taught us to think rightly of God, may then pass out of our lives, is to take the heart and the nerve out of the Gospel.

Our confession that Jesus is the Son of God has faith-value for us when, and only when, we have seen God in Jesus. It cannot be too much emphasised that, apart from Jesus, we cannot know the God of Jesus, and that there is no other God than He. Whatever else we set up as God is only an idol. This is the burden of the closing words of the First Epistle of John: "We know that the Son of God

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

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has come, and has given us insight to know Him who is the Real God ; and we are in Him who is real, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the real God, this is life eternal. My dear children, keep clear of idols.”¹ It is everything to know Jesus as He is and to be “in Him.” It is true, on the other hand, that only God, through the Holy Spirit, can reveal Jesus to us. That is more than suggested by the earlier words of a verse already referred to : “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father ; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father.”² It is also assumed in Paul’s words : “When it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son in me.”³ We might seem here to be involved in a circle, the Father revealing the Son, and the Son revealing the Father ; but the difficulty is formal and not real, for at the time when Christ was revealed to Paul, God, while being the source of the revelation, was Himself not yet revealed to him. God revealed His Son to Paul, and by that means revealed Himself. Instead of presenting a difficulty, the apparent circle substantiates the great Christian affirmation that it is everything to know Jesus as He is, and to be in Him by faith.

To Christian faith, the historical Jesus was the perfect revelation of God for man’s salvation. That revelation could not be complete until He had finished His work on earth. Even those who gave

¹ 1 Jn. v. 20, 21 (Moffatt).

² Matt. xi. 27.

³ Gal. i. 15, 16.

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Him their faith and love most unreservedly could not, while He was still with them, know all that He was nor get from Him all that He could give. Peter's first¹ confession of Him as Son of God meant much. But it had to be far more deeply informed before the ardent disciple could become the intrepid apostle. Faith could be genuine without being perfectly enlightened as to its object, and such a faith was all that Jesus expected of His disciples in the days of His flesh. That is just another way of saying that He revealed God truly, even before He revealed Him fully. Until His Cross was a completed fact, the revelation could not be full-orbed. He always did the Will of God, but He could only reveal all that Will by accomplishing its requirements up to the end.

The earthly life of Jesus can be interpreted as His preparation to be our Saviour. We should not shrink from the fact that He had to complete His Personality as Redeemer of men. The New Testament does not shrink from it.² To predicate growth of His earthly life does not derogate from His divine Sonship and is necessary to the reality of His humanity. If we imagine that the Son of God must have seen as deeply into His Father's Will at the start of His life as at its close, then we must be setting up our own ideas against the actual Son of God. To say that growth in Jesus implies that

¹ Matt. xvi. 16.

² Lk. ii. 52; xii. 50; Heb. ii. 10.

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He was not always divine is to make the divine a creation of our own fancy. No one can imagine a more divine Man than the Jesus of the Gospels. We ascertain what the divine is by looking at Him. He was always perfect man and He was always the Son of God. He is both of these at this hour. Christian faith therefore clings to Him and Christian experience has in Him its well-spring.

B. THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

The death of Jesus was in a unique way the culmination of His life. There is nothing which is a true analogy to it in history or experience, not even the death of a Christian martyr. It takes its place in history, alone and incomparable. It was the complete expression of His character, the climax of His work of holy love, the final acquiescence of His perfectly consecrated Will in the Will of His Father. To this His life tended ; for this He came ; by this, He knew that God was drawing nearer to men for their salvation. The memorial feast which He instituted on that night in which He was betrayed, and which He ordained for His people in time to come, was a memorial of Himself in His love unto death. He meant by it that whatever His followers might forget, they must remember that He died for them. People like to remember their departed friends as they were when they were at their best, when the ruddy glow of health was upon their

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cheeks and the kindly smile in their eyes. But Jesus chose to be remembered and celebrated by His friends in the love which abounded to them in the agony of His death. Even if there were nothing else, this is proof enough that He regarded His death as containing the meaning and essence of His life and ministry for men. The controversies which have gathered round the Lord's Supper seem to have obscured it for some, but the Supper keeps bearing its irrefutable testimony to this, that in the mind of Jesus His death opens to us the gates of life.

The death of Christ is the central theme of this book and we must soon concentrate upon it more particularly. At this point it is sufficient to emphasise its centrality to Christian faith and life. As was foretold by Jesus Himself, it was destined to take its place at the source of Christian experience. The declaration that He died for our sins was put in the forefront of the Apostolic Gospel. In Peter's speech to the people on the day when the Church was born, we find that forgiveness was preached in the Name of Jesus.¹ That fact is singularly impressive, for Peter was speaking to men who had played their part in the actual crucifixion of Jesus, and we might imagine that he would have been content to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and thereby stir them to a realisation of the enormity of their folly in fighting against God.

¹ Acts ii. 38.

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But Peter did not stop there. It was not enough for them to be conscience-stricken over what they had done to Jesus; they must seek forgiveness through faith in Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus was the means by which they were brought to conviction of sin, but there was no forgiveness for them save in Him whom they had crucified. It is the heart of the Christian message that it is by His stripes that we are healed.

Faith in Christ cannot rise to that devotion and abandon which are of its very essence, except under a strong sense of indebtedness to Him. He who for any reason fails to acknowledge His immeasurable debt to Christ lacks the most compelling motive that can sway the heart. He may be attracted by a high ideal, but that will not serve him well enough in the day of fiery trial. He may be unable to read the story of the crucifixion with dry eyes, but if he does not feel that he owes Jesus more than tongue can tell, his tears are like those which some people shed over a romance. But it is remarkable how the simple story of the death of Jesus can move to its foundations the mind which is not tied to its own pride or prepossessions. It is not a picture merely; it is a searching and moving appeal which never fails to win the heart which is not forearmed against it. Theories of the fact of the Cross have their own place, but they can never be true substitutes for the declaration of the fact itself. The ideal

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preacher of the Gospel is he who has learned how to pass on to his fellows the word which God has spoken once for all in the Cross of His Son.

C. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

The two fundamental notes of the earliest Christian preaching were that Christ died for our sins and that God raised Him from the dead. Of these two notes the latter was the more prominent at the very beginning. The speech of Peter on the great day of Pentecost, to which reference has already been made, is in complete accord with historic likelihood. It is difficult to believe that an historian, writing about half a century after the event, could have invented a speech of this kind. But if he could have invented it, and if he was the kind of man that he is pictured by those who hold the theory of invention, it is difficult to believe that this is the kind of speech which he *would* have invented. Not only does it set the resurrection of Jesus in the foreground; it strikes at the consciences of the hearers by charging them, not with their sins in general, but with the specific sin of crucifying Jesus. An inventor would have been likely to echo the approved and less daring appeal to the general conscience of the crowd. Be that as it may, the three thousand people who were conscience-stricken by the appeal as it was made bear ample testimony both to the fact that Jesus

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rose from the dead and to the awakening force of the fact. It is clear, indeed, that, apart from the resurrection of Jesus, there would have been no Pentecostal appeal at all.

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus was thus the gate through which men poured at first into the Christian Church. It made its appeal successfully, first to the intelligence, then to the conscience, and lastly to the will. That it did appeal to the intelligence of thousands of people of that day is a profoundly impressive circumstance for anyone who keeps an open mind to history. A story about a person rising from the dead was as hard to credit then as it is now. Wonder at the unusual, and readiness to deny an alleged fact which it is safe and even profitable to deny, are not peculiar to the modern mind. There were subtle minds in that old time, and very many of them were much concerned to deny that Jesus had risen from the dead. Powerful motives urged them to strain every nerve to disprove the testimony of the followers of the Nazarene, and thus serve two purposes which were intensely urgent—prick the bubble of the Nazarene movement and clear their own consciences. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, it was not a difficult task to prove that He had not risen. The time to prove their case was then, when, fifty days from His crucifixion, His disciples were boldly declaring that He had risen and thousands of people

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on the spot were accepting the declaration as true.

Why did not the enemies of Jesus, who had in their hands all the power that rule could give them, disprove the resurrection-story at the time? The friends of Jesus did not hide the story; they published it abroad; they gloried in it; they made full and fearless use of it to convict rulers and people of the crime of putting Jesus to death. The only way out for the rulers was to set the theory¹ in motion that the disciples of Jesus had come by night and stolen the body of Jesus away while the guard slept. In point of fact, that is still the only alternative to accepting the apostolic testimony. Can we accept that alternative? Can anyone seriously believe that the first preachers of the Gospel founded all upon a deliberate fraud of their own? Even sceptics have given up that monstrosity long ago. But what must be insisted on is that, by every historical canon, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead stands proved. It was declared openly and boldly at the time and thousands believed it. If it could have been disproved, it should and would have been disproved then. But it was not disproved; the opportunity is past for disproving it; and in the eyes of all fair-minded men it stands as an unimpeachable fact on the page of history.

What keeps many people from being fair-minded

¹ Matt. xxviii. 13.

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towards the apostolic testimony is their preconceived notion that it was impossible for Jesus to be raised from the dead. It would have been a breach, they say, in the uniformity of nature. We must be allowed our preference for the view of one who was there, that it was impossible for Jesus *not* to be raised from the dead. Peter was a more consistent exponent of evolution than many who profess to be governed by that idea, for he could not imagine the body of Jesus having its further development cut short by death. But that was only after he had seen the Risen Lord. The Risen Body of Jesus was continuous with His earthly body, but it was a new creation from the hand of God. It was no longer subject to the limitations of finitude and we can find no better name for it than "the Body of His Glory."² This is not the place to enter into a full apologetic, but there is no word either in science or philosophy that need deter us from a whole-hearted acceptance of the apostolic testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. God intends us to rejoice in the incomparable tidings that His Son, who died for our sins, was raised from the dead on the third day.

Had Jesus not been raised from the dead, in the unique sense intended by the New Testament, the origin of the Christian Church would be inexplicable and its utility questionable, for there would then be

¹ Acts. ii. 24.

² Philip. iii. 21.

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a falsehood at its foundation. Nothing is more certain in history than that the original apostles of Jesus believed that He had been raised from the dead on the third day. It is putting it too tamely to say that they believed it. They knew it in exactly the same sense in which we know any event of which we have been witnesses. Of course, this knowledge of theirs had roots which went deeper down than mere observation could go. It was rooted in spiritual soil, as our knowledge of it must also be. But they knew it as only first-hand witnesses could know it. They regarded themselves as set apart to be witnesses of His resurrection, and if their witness is not true, there is no justification for the existence of the Church. The historical fact is that the Church owes its origin, under the power of the Spirit, to the apostolic testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

To Paul the resurrection of Jesus was the standard¹ and measure of God's redemptive power. It was also to him a foundation fact² for faith and forgiveness. God raised Jesus from the dead, not in order that men might be assured of the efficacy of the Cross for salvation, but as part of His work of salvation. All the same, the resurrection serves the ends of confirmation and assurance. It is His seal upon the redemptive work of Jesus, although it is not a mere seal. It is vain to try to imagine what

¹ Eph. i. 19, 20.

² 1 Cor. xv. 17

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would have happened if Jesus the Crucified had continued to sleep in a Syrian tomb, for in that case we should not have been discussing these questions now. Any benefit to be derived from such mental images is better obtained by simply bearing in mind that apart from the resurrection of Jesus there would have been no redemption by Jesus. The two things are linked together in one indissoluble fact. It is not only that without His resurrection we should be left under a pall of doubt as to the validity of His redemptive consciousness; His redemptive work would never have been available to us. His death was the agony in which our redemption was born; His resurrection was redemption's birth.

That Jesus is our absent Lord is the consistent attitude of New Testament faith. The ascension and the return, which bulk so largely in that faith, are sufficient proof of this. But there is abundant proof of another kind. Paul, whose mysticism is so often discussed, was as clear in his own mind as anyone else about the absence of his Lord. With all his sense of the power of Christ resting on his life, with all his straining of prepositions to express the intimacy of the Christian with his Lord, he never leaves us in doubt that the Risen Christ has His present abode at the heart of the Eternal. He can conceive of nothing better than to be "in Christ" here below, but departing means for him

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being "with Christ; which is far, far better."¹ Amid all the joy in Christ which abounds in the pages of the New Testament, there is discernible a wistful longing for His nearer presence. This longing is as appropriate to the conditions of human life as to the Christian facts. The joy which can imagine nothing better than itself is not a joy for mortal man, for it would leave no room for hope. Hope is essential to human life, and it is fairest and strongest in the Christian life. The joy which is in Christ keeps looking forward, as it is pledged to do, to something better still. Whatever we say about the power of Christ in this life, we must abound in hope of the time when we shall be for ever with the Lord.²

The Christian hope for the life which is to come, as well as for that which now is, is built upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In His Risen Life we have our assurance that we shall live also. Our redemption will be completed in the redemption of our bodies. The difficulty which is raised by the dissolution of our bodies in the dust is of a childish order. It is no part of the Christian faith that the very same particles of matter that were organised into our bodies at the moment of death must all be gathered together again to form our resurrection bodies. The body of Jesus knew no corruption; doubtless it is in order to keep this historical fact

¹ Philip. i. 23.

² 1 Thess. iv. 17.

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in the forefront that so much emphasis is laid upon His rising *on the third day*. But our bodies do know corruption. The purely physical part of them goes back to dust. But there is a part which is not purely physical, and that is the real body. Even now the physical part of us is continuously changing, and there should be no difficulty in believing that in the resurrection our bodies will undergo a far more radical change. They will be clogged by nothing that is purely physical. They will be real bodies, fit instruments of the Spirit, like to the Risen Body of Jesus. The scaffolding will have been removed, and we shall understand what the scaffolding meant and what the true structure is. Meanwhile our whole hope for the future is built upon the Risen Christ. It is a hope which will never put anyone to shame, and all who are in Christ are called to rejoice in it with joy ineffable.

CHAPTER III

The Redemption Through Christ.

THE redemption which comes through Christ to believers on Him is their deliverance from the evil which afflicts human life. It is not to be limited to deliverance from moral evil, for the reason that it would then be a mere abstraction. The moral life of man is not an entity which can be isolated from his personality as a whole. Redemption is the deliverance of personality from all the evil that has invaded and ravaged it. The compassion of Jesus for men in their sicknesses and sorrows, no less than the apostolic expectation of the final redemption of the body through resurrection, forbids us to confine our thoughts of the Christian redemption to deliverance from sin. Nevertheless, redemption is an organic process, and we may quite well hold that deliverance from sin, while not exhausting it, is yet the nucleus from which it is unfolded. Since our present aim is to concentrate on that nucleus and not to picture the whole process, we shall adopt the method of passing from the general to the particular aspect of the redemptive work of Jesus. For that method we have the highest authority. At the institution of His Supper, Jesus took bread

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and, having given thanks, broke it and gave to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body." There the *general* fact of redemption is expressed, that Jesus, by His death and resurrection, becomes the bread of His people's souls. Later on He took the cup. We cannot think that this second part of the Supper is an exact replica of the first. The words: "Shed for many for the remission of sins," are conclusive that by the cup He was expressing the *particular* redemptive fact that His death is for the forgiveness of their sins. The Lord's Supper envisages His work of redemption for men, and we are on sure ground in following the thoughts which find expression there.

A. THE CROSS AND VICTORY.

When we contemplate the grip which evil has on the life of man and then turn our gaze upon the Cross of Jesus we see there the stupendous victory of holy love over the evil power which holds man's life in thrall. That Jesus was there in supreme conflict with the power of evil is something which must be reckoned with if we are to appreciate His work for men. The ordinary eye can see how the world's perversity and blindness and fury gathered in a heap against Him, but there was far more than that in it, though the ordinary eye may not see it. He met the concentrated assault of that malignant spirit which is more subtle and powerful than men

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can be, and which uses men as instruments for the accomplishment of its designs against God. The denial of this would remove the edge from the New Testament narrative of the Cross. There we are meant to see Jesus wrestling, not with flesh and blood, but with the principalities and powers of evil in the realm of the eternal.

The guilty men who brought about the death of Jesus, whatever misgivings may have been deep down within them, rejoiced to see the fulfilment of their dark plans, "and sitting down they watched Him there." But the power behind the throne, who had goaded on his puppets to the thing which they were now doing, saw farther than his puppets did, and knew that the decisive conflict was by no means at an end. The men had done their part loyally and successfully, but their prince had his great work still to do. What was that? It was to conquer the soul of Jesus. Arrived at the heart of things, he now found himself in that plight which was the climax of those plights into which his emissaries have fallen in every age. The very brilliance of his success had brought him to the point where one supreme success was still required to avert a dire calamity. He must defeat the Will of God in Jesus. He must persuade the Sufferer to come down from the Cross, and thus to succumb to the temptation with which he had solicited Him at the beginning of His ministry.

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It is significant that there is no suggestion, in the story of the Cross, that Jesus was tempted to "renounce God, and die."¹ The prince of evil was aware of the limits of the possible and had a sense of the fitness of things. That Jesus felt the swerving from the Cross to be His great temptation is manifest from the vehemence of His retort upon Peter when that impulsive disciple rebuked his Master for the proposal of the Cross. "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men."² Satan was working through the best friends of Jesus and was very dangerous when he was working there. Around the Cross we can see him using his more pliable instruments. "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross"³ was a perfect echo from the temptation in the wilderness. In order to achieve his purpose he had to put forth all his energy through every agency at his command. Everything depended upon the Will of Jesus giving way. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" is even more true of hell than of earth. The potentate who sways men so mightily had a tangled problem to solve. He must prompt men to crucify Jesus and he must prompt Jesus to resist crucifixion by working a miracle to save Himself. His maximum force was concentrated upon the Cross, but all was worse than in vain if the Will of Jesus

¹ Job ii. 9.

² Matt. xvi. 23.

³ Matt. xxvii. 40.

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would not break. His supreme aim was to break that Will. He had the human race under control ; why should he not have this Man too ?

To see anything morally unreal in the temptation of Jesus is not to see the Cross at all. It is a modern demand, and a right one, that all the light from the Cross should be ethical in character. That demand can be even more than satisfied, for the Cross is surely the supreme ethical event of history. If we wish to see into the heart of the moral struggle, we must look well at that situation on Calvary. Tempted as genuinely as man ever was, Jesus alone had to meet the onset of all the powers of darkness. No other man has ever been good enough, or important enough, to merit such attention from the prince of those powers. One day during the Great War, a British fifteen-inch howitzer came rolling up right into the middle of one of our infantry camps. After due preparation it started to send shells into the enemy-occupied town of Langemarck, in Belgium. When the first shell had sped and been followed by the naked eye till it reached the clouds, a private of the battalion, who had built his hopes upon a few days' tranquillity, was heard to remark: "That thing will draw hell-fire down here." And it did. In the Great War at Calvary, Jesus drew the whole fire of the enemy upon Himself. We cannot imagine the severity of His conflict with the foe, but we dare

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not forget that it was the very heart of the moral conflict.

The other differentia of the temptation of Jesus was the perfect, holy love which garrisoned His Will. This cannot be emphasised too strongly, but it can be emphasised in the wrong way. It has often been presented in a light which conveys the impression that no temptation had ever any chance with Jesus, and that His temptations were therefore unreal. That is most certainly wrong. Who that has ever read the story of the Cross can fail to see how the resources of Jesus were taxed to the uttermost there? If the power of the enemy was all brought into play, so also was the whole power of the Will of Jesus. It was holy love, in its perfect earthly manifestation, matched against everything that was concerned to defeat it. That Jesus had hitherto never known moral failure or defeat within His own soul made this moral conflict, not lighter, but heavier for Him. It was the integrity of His Will that brought the enemy down upon Him in full strength and made His task incomparably ethical and incomparably hard. When the sand had all but run out, in that hinterland of life where even the power to cling weakens to a thread, racked by pain, mocked by voices which seemed to recede into a mist, and hating injustice with a passion which could not die, Jesus knew the power of the temptation to cast men off and be done with them. His Will

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to do the Will of God, in holy love towards men, endured that strain, unsupported by anything beyond itself. It was the one perfect Will in human history, left to stand alone against the whole fury of that storm which makes shipwreck of human lives. That was "the hour of the prince of darkness" turned into the hour of the Son of God. "The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus on the eve of His agony, "and hath nothing in Me."¹ It was this that made the onset so tremendous and the victory so unspeakably glorious.

The victory of Jesus in such a conflict could not be complete until He breathed His spirit out. If His Will was not to break, then His body must break. There could be no triumph apart from death. By all the signs that untrained eyes can see, death spells defeat. But in the eternal world, which is never far away and which made full contact with earth at Calvary, this death was nothing but victory. No human eyes saw it thus at the time, for a few were blinded by sorrow, and the rest by self-will. The sorrowing eyes were indeed opened and made glad when Jesus was raised from the dead, but even then they could not at once know all that it meant. They only knew that it was victory. That was the first real aspect of the Cross to break upon their vision. It was not defeat after all; it was triumph. Whatever else it might mean, Jesus had triumphed in it.

¹ Jn. xiv. 30.

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We have already¹ pointed out that the resurrection of Jesus was no mere declaration of victory. It serves that purpose, for purpose with God has an inclusiveness of which our purposes know nothing ; but it has also a depth and concentration of which we know but little, and the resurrection of Jesus must be given a place among God's creative acts. The victory of Jesus could not be complete apart from death, but neither could it be complete apart from resurrection. Through the gates of the matchless death, He passed to the matchless life. Testimony to His resurrection was the most potent instrument of the preaching of the Evangel from the first, and we can hardly be wrong in thinking that it is meant to be the same still. The Church needs a new vision of it at this hour. She needs to have the resurrection of her Lord revealed afresh to her wondering eyes.

When the redemptive work of Jesus is regarded in this general and indisputable light as the victory of His Will over the evil will which ravages the life of man, there is no temptation to make the common mistake of imagining that the sufferings of Jesus ought to be quantitatively equivalent to all that men deserve to endure for their sins. Looked at as the Great Triumph, the sufferings of Jesus are seen to be linked all the time with the expression of His Will's energy. His perfect passion was at the

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 65.

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same time His perfect action. It is futile to try to separate these two aspects of His redemptive work and to say that this achieved one set of results while that achieved another. Whatever He won was won by the whole magnitude of His Will. The idea of a mathematical equivalence between what Jesus achieved and what men deserve has nothing answering to it in reality. True, His bodily sufferings have their counterpart in human life, and there are people who, through His Spirit, can taste something of His indignation at wrong and His pity for men. But the essence of His work upon the Cross was of a quality and intensity to which there can be no possible equivalent and to which it is meaningless to apply any standard of measurement at all. His triumph was in a region where He walked alone among the sons of men. "Of the people there was none with Him."

B. THE CROSS AND SIN'S CONDEMNATION.

However true and inspiring it is to see in the Cross the victory of Jesus, the picture yet belongs to that order of impressionism which demands that the particulars be filled in. In spite of what has been said, this general view of the redemptive work of Jesus might easily, by itself, evoke from us nothing deeper than admiration. The thought of His victory *simpliciter* might fail to touch the deepest springs of our being. There is that in the Cross

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which calls us to humble penitence, passionate gratitude, complete self-surrender, and we must get such a view of it as answers to these emotions and resolves. Our vision of it must be commensurate with that revolution of soul which is the beginning of a sinner's salvation. In Peter's address to the people at the great Pentecost, while there was no attempt to let the full glare of the Cross fall upon them, there was enough to pierce the consciences of thousands and call forth repentance and faith towards God. He charged them with the crime of putting to death One whom God had now raised from the dead, and his testimony persuaded them that they had been fighting against God. At his word they came to realise their guilt and seek salvation.

The implications of the victory of Jesus, and especially their implications for us in our sins, must be carefully examined. When we have said that the Cross was His victory, we must go on to say more. What we know of an ordinary victory does not explain this one, nor does even what we know of an ordinary *spiritual* victory. There were peculiar elements in His victory, and it is in these that its implications must be sought. The first implication is *the divine condemnation of sin*. By condemnation is meant in the first instance a declaration. The Cross of Jesus declares, more plainly than words can do, that sin is man's enemy and God's. That

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which brought about the death of Jesus could be none other than the power which wars against God and man, though man may reckon not of his foe. And in the Cross of Jesus, God condemned that power. He declared unmistakably that He can never come to terms with it. The Cross was the supreme manifestation of the strangle-hold which sin has over our race. Sin came out in its true colours there, for it proved its essential tendency to fight against God. Its apocalypse coincided with God's declaratory condemnation of it. Whatever we may think about our sins, God has once for all declared that He cannot brook them.

It is not God's way to make bare declarations to men, for if that were His way we might expect His announcements to appear from time to time, printed in letters of gold upon the sky. The divine declaration against sin is also the divine judgment against the sinner. When a man who has no artistic sense looks upon a great work of art, he may see nothing in it. In addition, if he has not been told that it is great, he is quite likely to say that he sees nothing in it. He may think that he is judging the work, but the truth is that the work judges him. The judgment is that he lacks the requisite sense. This race of ours, in its blindness and perversity, rejected Jesus under the self-deception that it was judging Him. But through that very act there came upon it the divine judgment that it is blind

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and perverse. The Cross judged men to be the creatures of the power which hates God and which God hates. We sometimes say that by foolish judgments men judge themselves. That is a figure of speech. The fact is that in our foolish judgments we are judged by God. By the Cross of His Son, God has passed His unequivocal judgment upon our race.

But if the divine condemnation of sin meant nothing more than that, then were we of all creatures the most hopeless. We must pass on to see that it was more than a declaration against sin and a judgment against sinners. It was an operation against the root principle of sin in human life. That root principle is alienation from God. As the essence of the good will is whole-hearted co-operation with the Will of God, the essence of the bad will is, in a phrase borrowed from Principal Rainy, a "something in us which objects to God." The sins which we commit, so various in character and degree, have all the same tap-root there. However respectable our lives may be, we are all wrong with God if we lack filial love and trustfulness towards Him. The crucial temptation of Jesus was to let the filial cord snap which bound Him to His Father. The evil principle which wells up as sin in man, and whose final objective it is to alienate man from God, launched its full attack upon Jesus. The ultimate design of the attack was nothing short of

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alienating Jesus from God, but the attack was delivered in the guise of an attempt to alienate Jesus from man. There were many plausible reasons why Jesus should repudiate man. Was He not being repudiated by man? But love at its best proved stronger than evil at its worst. On the levels of human history, evil was baffled once for all in its grand assault. Within the ebbing life of Jesus, God was passing His operative condemnation upon sin. Upon the Cross, divine love broke the sway of evil among men for all who should consent to become debtors to that love. But the sway was broken first of all in the soul of Jesus through the breaking of His body. It is not enough to say that the Cross declares love, and not evil, to be the last word in the universe. The Cross has *made* love the last word in man's universe.

C. THE CROSS AND REDEMPTIVE POWER.

What we have been saying leads straight to the conclusion that the power which the Cross made available for man's redemption is concentrated in Jesus in virtue of His redeeming work and His rising from the dead. To conceive of that power as some new virtue infused into the universe as a whole, or even into the sub-conscious life of man, is to reduce the spiritual to the level of the non-spiritual and to get away from realities. We must be saved from above and not from below. The fact

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that faith in Jesus is the condition of receiving the power implies that the seat of the power is in Him. Of course, God is the ultimate source of all redemptive power, and we must beware of regarding Jesus as a source independent of Him. But it is the very nerve of the Gospel that power is available for us through faith in Jesus. In virtue of the divine condemnation of sin which was achieved through His Cross, He has become a new centre of spiritual energy for the life of the race. Power for our redemption is vested in Him.

Jesus lived in the filial consciousness even unto death, resisting the utmost that the power of evil could do to drive Him from it. He was always the Son and was declared to be so with power when He was raised from the dead. The redemptive power which is vested in Him is, in its essence, the power to make men sons of His Father. In the language of the New Testament, He is "the Beloved," the Son by right, and He has the power to make us sons by adoption. "God sent forth His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."¹ Paul's repetition of the word "sent forth" is impressive, for it implies that the act of God, in sending us power to be sons in virtue of the redeeming work of the Son, is as clear

¹ Gal. iv. 4-6.

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and definite as His act in sending Jesus into the world. It is because of the Son that we are made sons.

And yet the sons are very unlike the Son. Since we are living under a moral régime in which character cannot come to maturity all in a moment, but must have time in which to grow, it never happens that a man, however revolutionary is his experience in conversion, becomes a full-grown son in an instant. But something vital may and does happen in him instantaneously. His will takes a new orientation through his believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus orientates towards God a will formerly set elsewhere. We are thus compelled to ask how a will set wrong can get a start in the right direction. Clearly the starting-point is the chief difficulty. It adds no new light to say that by faith the will receives power from the great source, for the genesis of the requisite faith is exactly what needs to be explained. Faith is the very thing of which the wrong will might well seem incapable, and, if it does emerge in such a will, we are obliged to find out what it is like and by what it is generated. We cannot advance towards an adequate answer unless we recognise that there is no hope for the wrong will until its whole past, which has made it what it is, is effectively dealt with, and until the will is convinced that this reckoning with its past has actually taken place.

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No man can set his face towards God so long as his path is blocked by what he himself is.

Those who hold that the bad will carries within itself the power of its own reformation are thinking only of isolated manifestations of the will. A man may see that drink is threatening to be the ruin of him, may summon up all the resources of his will and may, without any thought of a power beyond himself, repel the threat by giving up drink. By so doing he adds greatly to his own health and peace of mind, and to the happiness of his family, but it by no means follows that his will is now good. Indeed, if he begins to plume himself upon the strength of his own will, his egotism is thereby increased and he may easily be farther away than ever from the Kingdom of Heaven. The change from a self-centred will to a God-centred one is the only change that can put a wrong will right, and it is a revolution which can only be effected with the help of resources other than those which are inherent in the wrong will itself. That man remains unsaved who is not saved by God.

Concentrating now upon the new starting-point which the disordered will must find, if it is to find salvation, we must raise a new question. Is the idea of our *standing* with God one which we can seriously entertain within the circle of ideas associated with redemption? The doctrine of the imputation to us of Christ's righteousness has in

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many theological quarters been discarded as inconsistent with the Christian thought of God, and it has to be admitted that this doctrine has often been put in such a way as to suggest nothing better than a legal fiction. But discarding is so difficult and delicate an art that one need not be deemed rash in suggesting that some modern theologians may have fallen short of mastery in it. The scriptural doctrine of imputation cannot be brushed aside as a legal fiction. When Paul speaks of God, in reconciling the world unto Himself, as "not imputing their trespasses unto them"¹ it is clearly with spiritual realities that his mind is occupied. The thought of our adoption is linked inseparably in his mind with that of God sending forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. Or when John writes: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are,"² he makes it plain that the imputation of sonship is not to be separated from the reality of sonship. Whatever we make of the New Testament idea of imputation we are bound to admit that it is always in the closest touch with Christian experience.

It is easy to assume, but not so easy to prove, that the conception of power is more intelligible and ethical than that of right. It is a legitimate and serious question to ask what right we have to

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

² 1 Jn. iii. 1.

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become children of God, seeing we have made ourselves so unlike God by our sins ; and we should not challenge the ethical appositeness of the question, were we able to see sin as it is. It is of the nature of sin's poison to deaden the moral sense, and we who have all tasted of that poison are not entitled to pose as expert judges of its character. Alone among the sons of men, Jesus, because He "knew no sin," was able to look upon the face of sin and see right into its heart. The constraint of the moral facts is upon us all to confess that we belong to a colony of the blind and that One has come among us who can see. If our eyes are being opened to the seriousness of sin, let us be thankful to Him who gives sight to the blind, but let us be humble enough to believe that our eyes are not wide open yet. If we do not call Jesus Lord in His appraisalment of sin, there is no force in calling Him Lord anywhere. We are bound to conclude from the facts of life, as well as from the teaching of the New Testament, that the power which saves us finds its starting-point in us in our "authority to become children of God."¹

It is noteworthy that the word *ἐξουσία* (authority) in the text just quoted is the same as is attributed to Jesus Himself : "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth."² In virtue of the authority given Him after His death and rising, Jesus gives to those who receive

¹ Jn. i. 12.

² Matt. xxviii. 18.

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Him authority to become children of God. How are we to conceive of this authority which is delegated by Jesus to those who believe on Him? At least we must conceive of it as vested in Jesus through His death and resurrection. The authority to become a child of God is given to a man, and he is conscious of it as a gift, in that transforming experience which comes to him when his will undergoes entire revolution. As he comes face to face with Christ, and with the suffering love of God in Him, he sees for the first time both the cost of his sin to God and the depth of the love which has borne that cost. It is a bewildering and overwhelming experience in which elements of thought and emotion and will commingle at their highest and deepest. To his intelligence there comes the great discovery that his self-centred life has been all the while grieving God; that the sufferings of Jesus were borne in redeeming love for him; that in the love which has met and found him, and there alone, he has the authority to become a child of God. He knows that he has not had that authority until now, but that now he has it in assured possession. Out of the discovery springs emotion in the form of gratitude, contrition, trust, and a love which answers the love which has conquered him. His will, which is thought and emotion in appropriate action, is now transformed. It is God-centred. He is called a child of God, and such he is.

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For an illustration of this conveyance of authority we can hardly do better than turn to the parable of the Lost Son. The thought of becoming a son in his father's house did not and could not occur to the home-sick lad until he came face to face with the father's love and sorrow. He had never known what it was to be a son, for the simple reason that his self-will had kept him from recognising the depth and wisdom of his father's love. Nor in the far country could he remember what he had never known. True, he became a sadder and wiser man there, and he developed just enough of truth in his heart to prompt a start for home. But he was still the centre of his own picture. He was sorry for himself, and perhaps even angry at himself, but all this was only a first step towards repentance. The second step was his homeward journey in the faith that his father would not altogether cast him off. But his real repentance came when he confronted his father. That embrace, that kiss, the marks of sorrow on the old man's face, the manifest joy at the return of the lad—these things broke down the wanderer's old personality and built up a new one for him. They also broke down his speech, for he was not able to get out the words: "make me as one of thy hired servants." Probably these words were choked by a sob, but in any case they were felt to be out of harmony with the new and unexpected situation. At the meeting there came

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to him the great revelation of love and sorrow, bringing with it a revelation of the boy to himself. The centre of his life was suddenly shifted from himself to his father and to the love which had discovered him to himself; now he knew what his father was and what a son might be; now, in that overwhelming experience which came to him on the way, he received the authority to become a son and he knew it.

The question as to how God is related to the mass of imperfection which still clings to the rightly-orientated will is one which must be dealt with in the next section. Meanwhile it is sufficient to remember that the sin of which we are not aware is one of which we cannot repent, and that there can be no forgiveness apart from repentance. One may be a forgiven man, while there remains much in his life which needs to be forgiven and for which forgiveness tarries. It is only in the progress of the life lived in Christ that one gets to recognise this sin and that sin within him or around him, but at the moment when he caught his first glimpse of the crucified and risen Lord, he recognised his whole life to be deep-dyed with the sin which brought his Lord to the Cross. We can be deeply conscious of our sinfulness without being conscious of every sin in us, and we can be forgiven men while much that is in us awaits forgiveness. This is in entire harmony with the thought of Jesus when He said to

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Peter : " He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."¹ The initial experience of forgiveness which comes to a man when he pledges himself in faith to Christ covers his whole life, but the experience is not completed until it is hammered and shaped on life's anvil.

If this is true to the facts, it implies that a Christian man's unrecognised and unrepented sins are dealt with by God in view of the man's faith in Christ. Imputation must be a genuine spiritual fact. Our faith in Christ is imputed to us for righteousness. It is impossible to see how we can ever *become* righteous until we are first *reckoned* as righteous, and know that we are so reckoned. That new orientation of the will towards Christ, which is faith, puts us on the way of salvation—the only way on which we can work out our salvation. We need to be on that way and to know that we are there, else we fail in faith and so fail wholly. Lack of assurance is always lack of faith, and it is not by the doubtful mood that we are to reach our goal. As we are meant to share the victory of Jesus, we are called to the mood of victory and called to it at the very start of our new life. This mood is inspired by the conscious reception from Him of the authority to become children of God, a reception which is inherent in our reception of Himself in faith. Faith

¹ Jn. xiii. 10.

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in Jesus implies that we are reckoned according to what He is able to make of our poor lives. There is no fiction about it. "This was I worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

D. THE CROSS AND FORGIVENESS.

In the previous section an attempt has been made to establish the thesis that the redemptive power of the Cross has its starting point of application for us in the delegation to us of the authority which is vested in Jesus in virtue of His redemptive work. Both the authority and its delegation must be thought of as spiritual and redemptive magnitudes, but this can be done more naturally than in the case of the more popular magnitude of *power*, even when we put the adjective *spiritual* or *redemptive* in front of that word. It is exceedingly hard to keep the conception of power up to the spiritual level, so inveterate are the mechanical associations of the word. You cannot think abstractly of authority or of the delegation of authority, for both of these conceptions suggest personality at once. It can therefore be claimed that the method which we are following has the advantage of spiritualizing our conception of power.

We have been inevitably led into the region of repentance and forgiveness, but we must now concentrate upon that region for it is there that the nucleus is to be found of Christ's redemptive work

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for men. It belongs to the core of the Gospel that, in the Cross of Jesus, God was dealing with sin. He was doing something which needed to be done if we were to be forgiven. The difficulty which appears here on the threshold is that men were forgiven before Jesus came. Surely David truly repented and the writer of the fifty-first Psalm knew what it was to be truly forgiven. There is no need to question the genuineness or the depth of the spiritual experiences of Old Testament saints, but neither is there any need to question the centrality of the work of Christ in the realm of forgiveness. God's mercies are from everlasting to everlasting and His Spirit has never been idle with the human heart. But forgiveness always answers to repentance, and repentance can be sincere and profound while still lacking some quality without which it does not even begin to be complete. The quality of a man's repentance must be dependent, for example, on his thought of God. The Old Testament saints had a deep and growing knowledge of God, but never, even at the highest, did they attain to that knowledge of God which has been made available to us by Jesus. To deny this would be to deny the Christian revelation altogether. We may well be humbled by the quietly intense confidence in God which is breathed from the Psalms and which makes us feel that, if we can see farther than the Psalmists did, it is

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because we are like pygmies standing on giants' shoulders. But until the complete character of God, in His relation to man, was revealed, repentance could never have the quality which answers to such a revelation. Repentance is clogged at every step of life by an incomplete knowledge of God and forgiveness is clogged along with it. No Old Testament saint had that thought of God which is requisite to the kind of repentance that the Cross of Jesus can inspire.

But the knowledge of God cannot be imparted to us simply by the telling. It has spiritual prerequisites and implications which carry us straight to the heart of redemption. Information about God means nothing, or even worse than nothing, to the soul which is not prepared to receive it and to act upon it. The veil which hides God from men is not of His weaving but of theirs, and revelation is the removal of the veil from their faces. That removal can only be effected by a revolution in their lives, for revelation always spells revolution. The complete revelation of God which is available for us in Christ must have brought with it the means of a complete revolution in our souls. It is the essence of the Christian faith to believe that in Christ, through His work of redemption for us, there is open to us that forgiveness by which He can make our lives wholly new. That forgiveness of this kind had not yet come, but was surely coming,

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was the crown¹ of Old Testament prophecy; that it had come at last in the crucified and risen Jesus is the heart of the New Testament message. Forgiveness is the foundation of the New Covenant.

The question of God's relation to unrecognised sin was held over from the last section, and now we suggest that it is in that relation that the key to the differentia of the New Covenant is to be found. It is assumed that there is unrecognised sin in all men. There is an ignorance which is culpable, and there is an ignorance which is not culpable; but the universality of culpable ignorance is an immediate inference from the universality of sin. All sin begets ignorance by dulling the moral sense. A man's intellect is always most alert with regard to the object upon which his heart is most set, and it is never alert in regions where his heart is not at home. When he is indifferent to God, he is to blame for the ignorance which springs from that indifference. He is also to blame for the blindness induced by all his past sins. Every sin which is not wholly repented of and wholly forgiven leaves an inevitable entail of blindness upon the soul, and the people who are most alive to the things of the spirit are most aware of the seriousness of that entail in their lives. The old saying: "the greater the saint, the greater the sense of sin" is no morbid exaggeration, but a sober, spiritual fact. The

¹ Jer. xxxi. 34.

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plough of time keeps turning over new soil in the field of life, bringing to the surface ungainly things which humble most those who are most sensitive. We may not be able to tell where the unsightly things have come from, but we cannot be far wrong in connecting them with past sins, which have not been wholly forgiven because they have not been wholly repented of.

The divine relation to this sinful entail which is in every human life has light thrown upon it by the words of Jesus from the Cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."^x Whether the reference was to the Roman soldiers who were carrying out the orders of their superiors, or to all who were directly concerned in the crime, or to the whole human race, need not be discussed here, although we think strongly that what prompted the words was the thought in the mind of Jesus that there He was, being cast out by a world which He had come to save. In any case, the prayer is to be interpreted as intercession reaching its farthest limit and passing over into something still greater than itself. Here we have all that intercession can ever be, and, added to that, the something more which no other intercession on earth has ever been.

Three principles which stand in need of emphasis must be applied to this prayer. (1) Jesus

^x Lk. xxiii. 34.

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was not more intent on man's forgiveness than God was. His love for men must have been an exact expression of God's love for men. Nothing could have been more foreign to Him at any time than to think of Himself as wringing our forgiveness from a reluctant God. Intercession is never an attempt to change the Mind of God ; it is a means of working out the Will of God. If, when we are interceding for those whom we love, we have it in the back of our minds that we love them better than God does, our intercession is stultified. It is not real intercession, for it springs from an unworthy thought of God. True intercession is a supreme spiritual act in which we lay our wills alongside the Will of God for the accomplishment of His purpose in other lives. We cannot really help others until, in our attitude to them, we are at one with God. The intercession of Jesus upon the Cross was not a request made to an unwilling God, but the expression of a redemptive act in which, under conditions which made it unimaginably hard, He voluntarily and lovingly surrendered His own Will to the Will of God that men should be forgiven.

(2) Jesus did not take a less serious view of sin than God did. Had He done so, He could not have become our Saviour from sin. His words from the Cross reveal the tension upon His spirit, for they were wrung out of its agony. He knew all the enormity of guilt in the men who were

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crucifying Him and in the world which was rejecting Him. The blackness of the deed in His eyes is a presupposition in His prayer. It was a tremendous thing that such a race should be forgiven, and yet He willed that it should be forgiven, for God willed that, and, spite of everything, He must be one with God. In His prayer we see His Will triumphing over all the forces which were concerned to defeat it. Looking at wrong out of God's eyes, and suffering all that it could inflict upon Him, He concurred in God's Will that mercy should abound to the wrong-doers. His feeling about sin was an exact reflection of God's feeling about it. We cannot think otherwise than this, seeing that it is in the mind of Jesus that we read the mind of God. For us, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" appears "in the face of Jesus Christ."

(3) There can be no forgiveness apart from repentance. We may be ready and eager to forgive one who has wronged us, but if he cannot be convinced, or for any reason declines to confess, that he has wronged us, he defies and spurns our forgiveness. The one and only good that we can do to such a person is to pray for him. Prayer in such a case saves our own souls and keeps the redeeming power of God playing upon the soul of the offender, but it never expects him to be forgiven until he repents. The words of Jesus from the

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

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Cross did not mean that men should be forgiven there and then, apart from their repentance. They did not even mean that the door of forgiveness should be left open. They meant that a new door of forgiveness should be opened. It was the Will of God that forgiveness should be wrought out for men, and that Jesus should work it out, and Jesus knew it well. In this prayer of His we see intercession raised to its highest possible terms and passing over into something more than itself—reconciliation. By His perfect intercession for us He wrought reconciliation for us. On those terms He made reconciliation for the sins of the people, and it could be made on no other terms.

Further, the words, “for they know not what they do” declare that, while the ground of our forgiveness is wholly in the Will of God, a divine motive in forgiving us is based upon our blindness. If men had known all that they were doing in crucifying Jesus, there could have been no forgiveness for them on any terms. “If ye were blind, ye would have no sin; but now ye say, We see; your sin remaineth.”¹ The men who were responsible for the death of Jesus were not wholly blind. The blindest of them were the Roman soldiers, and yet they knew that they were adding needless torture to the agonies of a human being. They were to blame for their inhumanity. The

¹ Jn. ix. 41.

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representatives of Israel who were there were less blind and therefore more to blame. They ought to have known God so well as to be able to recognise His Son when He came, and so the abundance of their opportunity added to the abundance of their guilt. Judas had had the highest opportunity of all the rejectors, was least blind of all, and therefore the most deeply guilty. The essence of their sin in every case was that they had declined to let the light of God into their lives. The more that light had shone upon them, the more guilty was their rejection of it. But all of them were blind in their own measure, and in rejecting Jesus they proved that up to that point they had been rejecting God.

As Jesus marked the course of this world, He saw in the sins of men, including the sin of crucifying Him, the symptoms of a deeper trouble. The root of every human sin was man's heart-alienation from God. Men were made to be children of God, children who had much to learn but were in the child's way of learning it, but instead of that, their hearts were away from their true home. They did not know what it meant to be children of God, for they did not know God as their Father of holy love. They were not aware of their real malady, and Jesus, like a skilled physician, saw past the symptoms and put His hand upon the source of the trouble. He put His hand upon it at the very

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moment when it had produced its most disastrous effect—the rejection of Himself—and His hand was marred by the touch. But thus it became the healing touch, for love and power and God were in it, and all who cling by faith to that hand can have the reconciliation. In the Cross, God dealt with the source of our malady, and as we submit ourselves to the hand of the Good Physician, we pass from darkness into light.

If it is felt that this is metaphor rather than serious thinking, we can only reply that the Cross, of all things in the universe, must be looked at in a light which is charged and coloured with the deepest emotion. If it yielded entirely to the pressure of cold logic, it could not be the Cross of Jesus. Love, and most of all God's love, can never be reduced to a series of syllogisms. It is well to remember that, in attempting any interpretation of the Cross. Meanwhile we are dealing with faith's interpretation of it, and we may hold with complete confidence that the highest reason and the highest moral sense are honoured by that interpretation. When Jesus said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," He was uttering His eternal Amen to God's eternal Yea. God's supreme redemptive affirmation came to men in Jesus. It was His eternal Will that the door of reconciliation should be opened for His wayward children in order that, with a view to being finally

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delivered from the entail of their disordered past, their hearts and footsteps might be towards Himself. That door could only be opened by One who fulfilled His Father's Will unto the death. The Amen of Jesus upon the Cross was His acceptance of the work which was given Him to do. It was no mere declaration about God and man. It was His whole-hearted and passionate concurrence in His Father's Will for Him that He should Himself become the door through which believing men might pass into the road which leads to home and God. It was the Amen of One who was bent on seeing the Will of God through, doing as well as suffering, loving men as well as recoiling from their sins, triumphing through death. It was the Amen of Him who was dying for our sins.

As Jesus on the Cross was God's Yea for our redemption and as He uttered His Amen there in the giving up of His life, so, if we are to have a saving part in that same Cross, must we utter our Amen too. When we really see our Saviour there we know that the only attitude which befits us is one of penitence and surrender and adoring gratitude. It was for our sins that He died. That involves us deeply in His Amen. We are no longer our own, for we belong to Him who loved us and gave Himself up for us, and we must henceforth live by faith in Him. This surrender of mind and heart and will is our Amen, and the right and power

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to utter it come through Him alone. "In Him is the Yea : wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us."¹ We glorify God by concurring, with our whole life, in all that Jesus meant by His Cross. He died for our sins, and the moment we recognise that wondrous fact and proceed upon it in faith, that very moment the shackles of the old life are broken and, in spite of all the imperfection which clings to us still, we enter upon the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

¹ 2 Cor. i. 20.

CHAPTER IV

The Holy Spirit

IN the preceding chapter we considered the Christian redemption as an objective fact, but not, we hope, in a way which made it seem foreign to the life of man. Nothing could be worse than to convey the impression that the Work of Christ was in the air, out of relation to the spiritual world in which human character and destiny are determined. The conflict of the Cross was waged in the soul of Jesus, but it was waged for men. The forces which gathered themselves against Him were precisely the forces which war against God and man, and the holy Love which conquered them was the holy Love of God towards men. The conflict had human life for its immediate concern and the victory was for our benefit. The conflict and the victory being spiritual, their contact with human life must be spiritual also, and we have seen that faith in Jesus is the spiritual medium by which we appropriate the benefits of salvation. But saving faith demands the fullest explanation that we can find. Hitherto we have dealt almost exclusively with one side of the explanation, that, namely, which connects faith *dialectically* with its object. Faith cannot be

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accounted for without an adequate object whose appeal is met by faith's response, and so far it has been our task to represent the crucified and risen Jesus as the altogether worthy object of faith.

The other side of the explanation now calls for examination. Faith cannot respond except to an adequate appeal, but neither can it respond until it is generated. Our explanation of Christian faith must be vital as well as dialectic. The Cross of Jesus appeals first of all to the intelligence; but if it gets no further than that, the appeal is in vain. Until the appeal is felt by the whole personality, there can be no response of faith. Faith, which is the spiritual medium of man's appropriation of salvation, cannot be completely accounted for until it is seen to be born and nurtured from above. There must be a divine spiritual medium lapping the human on every side and permeating it through and through. Assuming that the divine intention of the victory of Jesus was to save men, and that it is only by faith that men can benefit from that victory, our outstanding question now is as to how God fulfils His intention in the actual saving of men. The apostolic answer is that the Holy Spirit is the divine medium of salvation. He commends and applies the benefits of Christ's redemptive work to human lives. The Holy Spirit and saving faith must be indissolubly linked together in all our thoughts about the conveyance of salvation to men.

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A. THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF MAN.

It is sometimes asked why the power of God is not more manifest in human lives, and especially why the Gospel is so widely ignored and even rejected, if Jesus really did the supreme work which Christian faith attributes to Him. This is a relevant and poignant question, and it is the strongest challenge that the truth of the Gospel has to face. That the love and power of God should be within our reach to save us from darkness and death to light and life, that many to whom this boon is offered should respond with nothing better than doubt or recklessness or contempt, and that those who do give a worthier response, should so often be so cold and listless towards Him who has done so much for them—all this is so staggering as to make the question the most serious that the Christian apologist has to meet.

Escape from the pressure of the difficulty has been sought in two directions which may both be described as blind alleys. One is predestination. Here, in the extreme form of that doctrine, all who decline the Gospel are held to be under the divine decree of reprobation, and that is the last word that can be said about them. But there are at least two things which can be said with certainty about the doctrine itself. One is that no human being has any right to say that another human being is

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among the reprobate, nor does he achieve that right by lifting his thought from an individual and settling it upon a large section of the human race; the other is that if predestination is a means of escape from one difficulty it brings us into another and a much more serious one. The fact is, it is not a solution of this or of any other problem, but only a counsel of despair. The other attempted escape is by means of a ritualism which is supposed to eke out what faith by itself is not able to do. So few people seem to be saved through faith that something else must be found to supplant faith or at least to supplement it. This is indeed an escape, but an escape from the religion of the New Testament. It despairs of both faith and reason.

The answer to our hard question must be sought in the nature of faith itself. Even the power of God cannot save a man until he is willing to be saved. Whatever removal of moral inhibitions may have been effected by the redemptive work of Christ it cannot imply that anyone can be saved apart from his will to be saved. This is the same as to say that redemptive power does not dispense with faith, but calls for it and takes the lead in generating it. Divine salvation gets purchase in a man's soul in proportion as his whole personality is bent in its direction. "Christ died for the ungodly,"¹ but He died for them to no purpose unless they consent

¹ Rom. v. 6.

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to become godly. The intellectual difficulty is removed when we reckon seriously with the spiritual nature of man.

Unless we distinguish somewhere between what is God and what is not God, the universe becomes unintelligible to us. It also becomes non-moral when we obliterate the marches between God and man. When nature becomes self-conscious in man, the distinction between God and not-God has grown to be acute, but this acuteness is with a view to a deeper and richer unity. The subject of unity and difference in the universe is one which can only be touched upon here, but there can be no doubt that a true attitude to it promotes a true conception of the whole realm of Christian doctrine. The fact that development plays its part in man's universe implies that there must be increasing differentiation in the interests of increasing integration. It is a strong substantiation of the spiritual principle which is in nature that in the lower forms of life differentiation does take place and does lead to new integrations. But what concerns us now is the operation of this law in the human will. Here God and not-God are more marked off from one another than in lower nature, and yet, in virtue of this heightened differentiation, the essential affinity of God and man is made to appear. That which most distinguishes man from God is precisely that which can unite him most closely with God. The spiritual character

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of the human will requires, of course, that it should play a conscious part in the process of integration, and this elemental fact reveals the sphere in which arise the most profound and practical problems in the universe, the problems of sin and repentance, of faith and redemption.

We can bring these general considerations to a point by remembering that the ideas of force and power and energy must be continuously re-interpreted when they apply to spiritual magnitudes. What is a spiritual force? It would be wrong to hold that it bears no resemblance to a physical force, and the Christian instinct is right in seeing the resemblance. It also can do things. Here, as everywhere within our ken, the spiritual transcends the natural, not by cutting itself off from it, but by lifting it up into itself. A spiritual force does things, even things on the plane of nature, but it takes intelligent account of all the conditions involved. It does not seek to coerce a will, which, being itself spiritual, cannot be coerced and still remain a will. It employs the means of reasonable, persuasive, earnest and loving appeal, and it is able to renew and strengthen the will which truly responds to its appeal. It has still something to say to the obdurate will and something to do with it, but as we are now considering only the character of a spiritual force, it is sufficient to emphasise the fact that such a force, by its very nature, is prevented from employing

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external compulsion upon that which is itself spiritual. In that region it is only inward compulsion that can be employed by the holy love which yearns to bring men into fellowship with itself. "The liberty of the glory of the children of God" can never be reached by the methods of the guillotine.

Man has thus his own part to play in the working out of his salvation. It is equally fatal to mistake what that part is and to deny that any such part exists; and it is reasonable to expect that it is something which is comprehensible by the most naïve mind, if indeed it is not something which is most comprehensible by the naïve mind. Man's part, as we have said in another connection, is faith, and this task of his belongs equally to the first step in his salvation and to its whole course. It is the life-long task of everyone who is being saved. It is true that the initiative in redemption is with God and that faith is God's gift as well as man's task. But if this is a paradox, it is the paradox which lies at the heart of things. Here is the region in which the increasing distinction between what is God and what is not God finds its culmination, its meaning and its completion. Faith is that zone in man's life where his will's unique independence of the Will of God melts into a new and deeper harmony. For this harmony the human will was fashioned; for this it was made free; for this Christ died.

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Faith is man's true exercise of his independence, his free abandonment of it to the Will of God. It is as obvious as anything can be that this is the only route by which the potentiality of freedom can pass into an actuality. Any other kind of effort after freedom is like hunting a will-o'-the-wisp. Surrender to the Will of God is the only gate by which a man can pass out of the dismal prison of necessity. It is given to us to choose whether we are going to escape from the prison or not. This choice is our highest birthright and the climax of our responsibility, and what we make of it determines both our character and our destiny.

It is sometimes said, on the other hand, that the equation of faith with man's part in the working out of his salvation is an undue reduction of the dignity of man. Human life, it is held, is built on more spacious and generous lines. The point of this criticism disappears whenever we recall what is meant by the Will of God. God has either to do with everything or with nothing in human life. If one chooses the latter alternative and prefers to think of himself as being in entire control of his own life, he may imagine that in this way he is swelling the bulk of his existence, but he is a victim to the worst of all delusions. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." If we are wise we shall accept the former alternative, in which case we are called to make up

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our minds as to what God's part in our life is meant to be. The only true life that we can picture is that which is lived out in conscious harmony with the Will of God, and the notion that the dignity and energy of human life are enhanced by having the smallest possible touch with God is evidence of unconquered mental perversity. Life is a poor affair until it is in process of being "filled unto all the fulness of God."¹ Amid all life's music, be it monotonous or grave or gay, nothing but God's deep undertone can produce that wealth and harmony for which, whether it knows it or not, every human heart craves.

The same consideration disposes of the criticism that surrender means paralysis of the will. Christian faith is surrender to God, and it is He who makes all the difference between freedom and bondage for the soul. Bondage spells atrophy; but the God-centred will, in discovering the secret of true freedom, is thus enabled to rise to the highest exercise of its energies. No other kind of will can possibly be in this position. Unsuspected powers are released in the soul which is surrendered to the Highest. God is too wise and good to spoil any child of His. While He pursues us unceasingly with goodness and mercy, it is only when, in a passionate surrender, we suffer ourselves to be overtaken that we are conscious of the pursuit.

¹ Eph. iii. 19.

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Till then, we may think rather that He is eluding us as we search for Him, and silent to us as we listen for His voice. His elusiveness is essential to His pursuit, for apart from it, patience and earnestness and indeed everything that gives character to the soul would die out of us. We cannot imagine what this life of ours would be like were we to have all our prayers answered at once in full, even assuming our prayers to be wise. An effort to imagine it will soon convince us that what we choose to call the reticence of God is a spiritual necessity. A true faith knows well enough that even when He seems to be reticent He is not idle towards us. Something is happening all the time. The prayer of faith is always being answered in the rising of the tide within us, slowly perhaps, but surely ; and some day, if our faith perseveres, we know that the little creek which we call our individual life has received the ocean into itself and all our stranded barques float easily on the tide. Faith is our task ; God is in and through and over all ; the man of faith is therefore more than a conqueror.

It is an assured position of modern thought, following somewhat late in the train of divine revelation, that nature is spiritual in its origin and is pervaded by a spiritual principle. But when we say that man is spiritual we mean much more than when we make a similar affirmation of nature. We

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mean that he, alone in nature, is gifted with the power of spiritual response and initiation. In the language of T. H. Green, "there is a sense in which man is related to nature as its author, as well as one in which he is related to it as its child."¹ His pre-eminence in nature gives him access to a plane above nature. He alone is called to conscious fellowship with God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God : and such we are."² That was written concerning those who are in Christ, but it is potentially true of all men. The inestimable worth of man lies in his being a possible child of God. This is the diamond which is so easily covered over by the dross of self and which Jesus came to seek and save, and its recovery implies that the man must become a little child again, with much to learn from his Father, but with childlike aptitudes for learning, the aptitudes of trust, wonder, obedience, and eagerness to love and be loved.

There is a highly sentimental notion in vogue, masquerading in Christian dress, to the effect that the true imitation of Christ is to find good everywhere, even in evil itself. Look for the good in the worst of men, it is said, and you will find it and be compelled to think well of him. This has no relation at all to the attitude of Jesus to men. Of course there is something good in the worst of

¹ *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 15.

² 1 Jn. iii. 1.

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men, for the simple reason that it could not possibly be otherwise. A human character cannot cohere without a modicum of the cement of goodness. A band of robbers could never ply their trade successfully without observing some of the laws of a true fellowship. This, as Plato said, is part of the tribute which vice pays to virtue. But to represent this as glad tidings, calling for complacent and charitable thoughts about everybody and everything, is moral and intellectual bathos. When Jesus moved among men, He believed in the diamond in them, but He never flattered them. He knew that the rescue of the diamond must be accompanied by the destruction of the dross and that this operation could not be carried through without much pain. Man, spiritual though he is, can be lost with consummate ease, and the loss is tragic because he is spiritual. Jesus gave Himself up in order that lost men might be found.

Any outline of this part of our subject would be very incomplete which failed to take account of its social aspect. The spiritual is rooted in the social in man. There are strong, subtle, invisible connections which knit every human being with his fellows, and every generation of men with all other generations, past and future. These connections carry spiritual influences to and fro, for good or for evil. Sociality is not a contrary, and still less a contradictory, of individuality. It

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is of the very essence of human individuality that man is a *socius*. A person without relation to other persons is as unthinkable in the spiritual as in the natural realm. The redemption of a man, like any other spiritual experience of his, cannot be dissociated from the life of the race to which he belongs. Now, the Holy Spirit inspires and directs the redemptive influences which pass between man and man, and between generation and generation. He carries the divine force through the life of the race. The sociality of the spiritual nature of man provides the spiritual field for his redemption.

B. THE IDEA OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Jesus, through His victory over the powers of evil, became a new centre of spiritual energy for the life of the race, and it is the function of the Holy Spirit to distribute that energy among men. We are saved from mechanical ideas of this function by bearing constantly in mind that the process is spiritual through and through. The Holy Spirit is spiritual, with that word raised to its highest meaning ; so is the redemptive force ; and so, in his own limited measure, is man. The solicitations of the Holy Spirit call for a spiritual response from us ; a free response which, while it cannot be absolutely marked off from its racial component and still less from its divine component, is yet the act of the most individual and responsible part of us.

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Keeping this well in mind, we are entitled to speak freely of the Holy Spirit's work in conveying the benefits of Christ's victory to men. We are not isolated from the Great Triumph unless by our folly we isolate ourselves. We are not only permitted, we are entreated to share in it. God, whose triumph it was, has seen to it that it is able to enter with redeeming force into our lives. Herein is our hope, that in presence of the whole power of evil within and around us, we know that Jesus once for all gained the victory over it, and that under His sign we can gain the victory too.

There are many who feel that the introduction of the idea of the Holy Spirit brings no help to the understanding of Christian truth. They hold it to be more congenial to the modern mind, and imagine it to be easier, to envisage Christian experience as the resultant of impersonal forces than as the operation of a personal Holy Spirit. That it is more congenial to the modern mind is to be admitted at once; that it is easier is to be strenuously denied. People who speak complacently of an impersonal force are not aware of the difficulty of that conception. As a phrase it represents a convenient *interim* hypothesis, but it also covers up a profound unsolved problem. Clerk Maxwell was fond of pointing out the essential difficulty of ideas in which most people see no difficulty at all. They use those ideas like counters whose value can

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be taken for granted, but what they really do is to transfer the whole problem into the counters. Instead of solving the problem they only shift its seat, which would be a harmless pastime if it were recognised to be no more than a game. A course of Clerk Maxwell is fitted to disturb one's innocent confidence in the simplicity of such a conception as that of an impersonal force. Let anyone try to think out what gravitation or "action at a distance" is, and the more vigorously he thinks, the more humble will he grow. The whole question of the transference of power, even in what we tentatively call the purely physical realm, is so beset by obscurity that no one is entitled to think of the idea of the Holy Spirit as an encumbrance upon a problem which is more easily solved otherwise.

Quite definitely, the demands of reason are better met by postulating the Holy Spirit as the immediate source of Christian experience than by deluding ourselves with an explanation which is no explanation at all. It would be a similar folly to pretend that the idea of the Holy Spirit is easy, but its superiority to the idea of an impersonal force can be seen in three vital considerations. First, *the idea of the Holy Spirit is rooted in the idea of God*. The idea of God is at once the most profound, the most necessary and the most practical of all ideas, and in no other idea can the mind ultimately rest. Whatever difficulties we may have with the idea of

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the Holy Spirit, they belong essentially to the Christian thought of God, which means that the mind, in thinking about Him, is both stimulated to labour and quieted by repose. This is the only attitude of mind in which developing beings can do their best. It has been said of nature that "while she labours as a machine, she also sleeps as a picture," and in this she provides a true and much-needed object-lesson for man.

Second, *the idea of the Holy Spirit dovetails with all the conditions of spiritual life*. The primary condition of spiritual life is that in order to realise itself it must pass beyond itself. Like must be born of like, and this is as true of thought and will and emotion as of anything else. The spiritual, within a developing system, is dependent, for its continuance and growth, upon something other than itself which is also like itself. The food of the spirit must be spiritual, and when we enquire about this food, while we find that it consists at least in the spiritual principle which is in nature and in that same principle grown conscious of itself in man, we also find that it is not exhausted there. There is a manifestation of God in nature and a higher manifestation of Him in man, but in a developing system like ours we must postulate a spiritual principle which is other and higher than that which is manifested in man as man. Otherwise growth of any kind is inconceivable. And since

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the spiritual principle in man transcends that which is in nature through the emergence in him of personality, it follows that a still higher form of that principle must be at least personal. The force which gives rise to Christian experience must be spiritual and personal through and through. The medium of that experience must be as personal as its recipient. The idea of the Holy Spirit is therefore adequate to the conditions of Christian experience.

Third, *the idea of the Holy Spirit is a practical aid to the Christian life.* Historically, the idea of the Holy Spirit arose directly out of Christian experience. It was an immediate or intuitive interpretation of experience, as distinguished from a more studied interpretation. Intuitions vary indefinitely in value and validity, but it is permissible to assume that intuition at its best is the highest form of intellectual energy. Intuition is reason at work under the most favourable conditions. Now when we find that the intuition with regard to the Holy Spirit sprang straight from the highest form of experience and, moreover, that it can be confirmed by a systematic study of all the facts, we have good grounds for trusting that intuition. The first Christians intuitively felt themselves to be in immediate contact with a power which was personal. It could not literally be the Risen Lord, for He was absent and they looked confidently for

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His return ; but it had the value of His actual presence with them and they felt no incongruity in describing it as His presence. When they spoke more precisely they called it the Holy Spirit, and they were constrained as naturally to distinguish between the Lord and the Spirit as they were to think of them as inseparably related. While they waited for their absent Lord, they were aware of being in the fellowship of One who was all that the Lord could be to them in the existing order. The Holy Spirit was the earnest of the inheritance awaiting them in Christ.

It may be urged that while the idea of the Holy Spirit was a spiritual aid to people who were waiting for the Lord's return, it ceases to serve this purpose in a Church which has surrendered that expectation. It has to be admitted that the idea loses something of its practical force for those who do not look for the glorious manifestation of Jesus upon the earth, and this raises the question as to whether the Church has not lost something vital in ceasing to look intently for the literal return of Jesus in glory. But it is sufficient to say here that the fullest Christian experience, now as in the earliest days, is that which knows best that there is a still richer experience in store. We look for new heavens and a new earth, and while we look and work and pray for them, we can find infinite help and comfort in the assurance that the Holy Spirit is in immediate

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touch with our spirits, taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to us. The human spirit, when it comes to know itself, feels that life would be a very solitary thing but for fellowship with Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

The notion, in which some find satisfaction and others alarm, that God is only the projection of our own ideas upon what is beyond us, has its source in the fallacy that a man's spirit is his prison. This fallacy is the mental equivalent to the disease of inverted vision. Man's spirit cannot be meant to be his prison when it is manifestly the only means of escape that he has from his prison. Much of modern psychology is resuscitating the inveterate error that our spiritual faculties cannot lead us out to any reality beyond ourselves. How can freedom be entertained as an idea, or achieved as a fact, in any other way than by means of these same faculties? Apart from them we should be involved in the chain of inexorable necessity without even being aware that we were so involved. It seems to take the human mind a long time to rid itself finally of the obsession that it is itself the great stumbling-block to the discovery of truth and that the best we can do is to make the stumbling-block do duty for the truth. It ought not to be hard to grasp the commonplace that the spirit of man is the only vehicle he has for the conveyance of the truth to him. It may be a very imperfect vehicle, but nothing can be more

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grotesque than the oft-recurring attempt to turn this imperfect vehicle into an impenetrable barrier.

It is precisely the same kind of fallacy that sees in the idea of the Holy Spirit something which interferes with the idea of a self-communicating God. God reveals Himself as immediately through the Holy Spirit as a man reveals himself to his friend through the soul that is in him. That is not to say that the relation between a man and his soul is a true analogy of the relation between God and the Holy Spirit. The fact that we belong to a developing system compels us not only to postulate the Absolute as the fundamental fact of existence, but also to accept the principle of relativity in all our thinking. There can only be one God, "of whom and through whom and to whom are all things," but our every thought of Him is subject to the principle of relativity. It is a simple fact, and one which must be constantly called in to keep our thoughts sober, that we cannot take the point of view of God. But we are able to think of God under the relations in which we are set, and those thoughts of ours, though not complete, can yet be true. They are true when they are revealed to us by Himself, and it is the Christian faith that He has revealed Himself to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is putting the same thing in another way to say that the Holy Spirit makes real to us Jesus Christ as the Revealer of God. The meeting-place of our spirit

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with the Holy Spirit is our meeting-place with God. "Spirit with spirit can meet," and the idea of the Holy Spirit, arising as it did at first out of an authentic spiritual experience, attests itself to reason as a conception which is essential to the true thought of God.

It needs to be emphasised that a man's whole spiritual equipment must be involved if his commerce with the Holy Spirit is to be unrestricted. When the Spirit is given full sway by a faith which is worthy of its object, there is no part of the personality which does not share in the influx of new life. The soul is a unity and it is treated as such by the Holy Spirit. It is hardly to be denied that too much has been made of the distinction between the ecstatic and the immanent manifestations of the Spirit's presence in the infant Church. If there were those with whom the idea of the Spirit was too exclusively associated with raptures and speaking with tongues, that does not justify us in making the opposite mistake of associating the idea exclusively with ethical as distinguished from emotional manifestations. Apart from emotion, both the ethical and the intellectual are abstractions. It is never a question as between emotion and no emotion, but as between the right and the wrong emotion. When Paul showed his Corinthian friends the "more excellent way"¹ of faith and hope and

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

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love, he was seeking to bring them to a sense of proportion. He was not condemning any true rapture. His whole life as an apostle was obviously bathed in a pure and high emotion. The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, consecrates the will, sublimates and heightens the emotions. He counts nothing that is human to be foreign to His influence, and touches the personality into the life which is life indeed.

C. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE RISEN CHRIST.

While the idea of the Holy Spirit arose immediately out of the earliest Christian experience, it had its antecedents in the minds of those to whom the experience came. They were already familiar, in their Scriptures, with the idea of the Spirit of God, even under the name of the Holy Spirit, but of course the idea in their minds was determined by their partial thought of God. Nor is there any good reason to doubt that, under the Master's guidance, they had learned to entertain some conception of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the promises of the Paraclete who was to come, recorded in the Fourth Gospel, the solemn words of Jesus about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, words which sank deep into the disciples' hearts, seem to imply that He was accustomed to speak of the Holy Spirit in terms of personality. Such mental antecedents would

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prepare them, when the time came, to read in the new experience which broke upon them at Pentecost the fulfilment of "the promise of the Father." Even if, as is likely, many did not instinctively connect their ecstatic experiences with the idea of another personal Spirit present to their own, it is not to be doubted that those whose minds were best prepared for the new experience did so, and that is all that is required for the argument.

The Pentecostal idea of the Holy Spirit was continuous with the idea of the Spirit of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, but there was a new element in it answering to the new experience. Those who had the new experience connected it directly with the death and resurrection of Jesus. They felt that He actually meant more to them now than He had done in the days of His flesh. It was *His* Spirit that was in them and with them. They were familiar with the glow which He had so often brought to their souls in bygone days, and here again was the same glow, but far better. No more the shadow of the parting ; no more incomprehension over their Lord's purpose ; no more cowardice or fear ; they were in a new world and they were rapturously aware of it. Nobody but those who had been with Jesus could testify with absolute confidence that this Spirit who now filled their lives was the veritable Spirit of the historical Jesus. But they did give this testimony, and we are bound to take it

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seriously and to give it a pre-eminent place. It was their first-hand witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, coupled with their first-hand witness to the identity of the Holy Spirit with His Spirit, that made them the foundation upon which the Church of Christ was built.

The identity referred to requires continuous emphasis. It is appalling to find earnest people in our own time persuading themselves off-hand that they have received a direct word from the Spirit, without pausing to make sure that the word in question answers to the Spirit of Jesus so clearly revealed through the pages of the New Testament. Zeal has its own peculiar perils, and it is perhaps the most serious of them that men and women, ill-instructed in the historical and ethical foundation of the Christian faith, so often mistake the phantasmagoria of their own imaginations, or it may even be sinister suggestions from the pit, for the authentic promptings of the Holy Spirit. It is more than likely that the fanaticism which has so frequently appeared in history under the guise of the Religion of the Spirit has given to many sober-minded people, perhaps unconsciously, a strong suspicion of the value of the idea of the Holy Spirit for Christianity. Luther's championship of freedom in the Spirit received a serious blow from his conflict with the "Zwickau prophets" and their followers. All such suspicion, however, is

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weak and foolish. If the abuse of an idea were always to be regarded as a cogent argument against the idea itself, we should require forthwith to surrender all ideas except the solitary one that we are a race of fools.

The difficulties which emerge when we are considering the relation between God and the Holy Spirit reappear, in an intensified form, when we come to the relation of the Risen Jesus to the Holy Spirit. Why bring in the idea of the Spirit when we have Jesus Himself? To those who ask this question, the answer already given, that the Holy Spirit is the Representative of the absent Lord, is not likely to be satisfactory. But it must be affirmed that there lurks in the question the well-worn fallacy that the Spirit can only come between us and Jesus as a kind of obstacle or at least as a superfluity. That fallacy must have many lives. The Holy Spirit as known in Christian experience does the actual work of Christ in human lives. He ministers Christ to us, and in so doing He brings us to God. His interest in us is wholly the interest of Christ in us. In Him, Christ makes contact with our spirits. And if one says, as some do say, that he prefers to feel that Christ influences his life without the mediation even of the Holy Spirit, we respect his feeling. But we venture to think that his feeling is not fully informed and we are certain that it is not in line with the apostolic feeling. There is

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never a suggestion in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit comes between Christ and the soul save to knit them together in the great fellowship. The fellowship of Christ and the believer is always fellowship in the Spirit.

We are convinced that a thorough-going recognition of that fundamental Christian fact does more than anything else can do to sweep away the difficulties which have gathered around this subject. It is not always recognised as the Christian position, that all the benefits of Christ are mediated to believers by the Holy Spirit. To say that the Spirit brings them to us and seals them upon our lives is the best way of saying that they come to us direct from Christ. We should not allow ourselves to be misled by the ordinary associations of the idea of mediation. When the Spirit mediates Christ to us, He brings Him to us in the only way in which Christ can be brought to us in this present order.

A Roman Catholic scholar with whom the present writer had a recent public controversy, declared boldly that the great dispenser of the grace of Christ to men is the Holy Virgin. Does it matter, some are disposed to ask, how we think of the conveyance of grace to us so long as it is conveyed? That question has been answered by history. It does matter a great deal. Our idea of the conditions upon which, and the means by which, the blessings

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of salvation come to us affects profoundly our idea of the blessings themselves, as it is affected in turn by our idea of those blessings. The idea of grace entertained by the Roman Catholic scholar above referred to was certainly very unlike the New Testament idea of grace, as unlike as the Holy Virgin is to the Holy Spirit. When we adhere resolutely to the New Testament doctrine that the Holy Spirit alone ministers Christ to us, we at least stop up a gap in our thinking which otherwise is apt to be badly occupied. This is not a final proof of the truth of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but it is a valuable confirmation of that truth.

Many of the controversies which have gathered around the Lord's Supper would never have taken place had the function of the Holy Spirit been acknowledged and understood by the Church as a whole. From the middle ages down to the present day there have always been those, learned and unlearned, who have proceeded upon the assumption that there is available for men in the Supper some kind of grace which is beyond the sphere of the Holy Spirit's operations. Sometimes this assumption has even taken the form of the doctrine that the Sacrament has Christian value for a man apart from the question as to whether he has faith in Christ or not. No one in the New Testament Church, even at Corinth, could have been induced easily to accept a doctrine like that. There is no blessing

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of salvation, either in the Sacraments or elsewhere, which is not mediated to the believer by the Holy Spirit. How readily the idea of magic slips in, when the idea of the Holy Spirit is forgotten! One is tempted to think that magic is the most successful foe that Christian doctrine has ever had to meet, and there is no sign that its successes are coming to an end. Many who speak in the name of the Church insist on displacing the Holy Spirit by something which is really pagan magic. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament is the Real Presence. There is no other. What higher presence can there be than He? The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, or, if we prefer to have it so, the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, is known to believers in the fellowship of the Spirit, and any other way of thinking of Christ or grace or the benefits of salvation is spurious and pernicious. We can defend the idea of the Holy Spirit in Christian doctrine when, and only when, we give Him the place which He actually holds in Christian life.

It is the very core of the New Testament Gospel that through the death and resurrection of Jesus there was liberated a new power for the salvation of men. The Holy Spirit is that new power. The significance of Jesus in history can be deduced from the fact that in Him the Holy Spirit got full sway for the first time within the limits of human life. That historical circumstance was bound to affect

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the redemptive order of the world. On the other hand, the Cross afforded the decisive proof that the Holy Spirit, up to that point, had anything but full sway in the common life of humanity. The death and resurrection of Jesus were the means by which the Holy Spirit, from having full sway *in* Jesus, began to have full sway *through* Jesus in believing hearts. God gained a new redemptive opportunity with men through the redemptive work of Jesus in history. From all the evangelists we gather the impression, which is most explicitly conveyed by Luke, that Jesus was "filled with the Spirit" as He fulfilled His ministry. At every point the Will of Jesus had perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit, and on Calvary the harmony reached its utmost depth and wealth. We can either say that Jesus brought the Holy Spirit in full measure into human life or that the Holy Spirit brought the divine Saviour Jesus into human life. The incarnation unto death is the ground upon which we stand in the confession: "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

The parable of the Good Shepherd¹ casts a strong beam of light on the mind of Jesus with regard to the place of the Holy Spirit in the transition from the old order to the new. He was speaking to what was for the most part a hostile audience. That accounts for the note of enigmatic defiance

¹ Jn. x. 1-5.

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in the parable and especially in its expansion, a note which might appear strange in the treatment of so tender a theme, did we not know from other sources that it was characteristic of His mood towards obdurate men as His ministry drew to a close. That He was within sight of the great climax means that His mind was saturated with thoughts of the end. We should expect this parable to be coloured by such thoughts, but we know from His own expansion of it that it was not only coloured but prompted by them. In short, this parable has for its theme His approaching death and resurrection and the issues which those events were to have for the true Israel.

The parable is a contrast, suitable to His audience and to His mood. The shepherd, coming to the gate of the fold, and recognised and admitted by the keeper of the gate, is set over against thieves and robbers, climbing up some other way. The shepherd, as He afterwards explains, is Himself. It is not told who the thieves and robbers are, but when we read in verse 8 : " all that came before Me are thieves and robbers," we are driven to the conclusion that they do not represent human beings at all but rather those malignant forces of the world which have invaded and spoiled the life of Israel. Those forces have their home in the wilderness in which the fold is set, and they have broken in upon the fold in spite of all the preparations made for the

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security of the sheep by night. The wall, the closed gate, and the vigilant keeper have not sufficed to keep the enemy out. The insufficiency of the old order of redemption is strongly suggested. The fold by night represents the past life of Israel, although the reference in verse 16 to sheep "which are not of this fold" reveals the thought in the mind of Jesus that He was coming to Israel with a view to coming to the whole world.

The point of the parable lies in the shepherd coming to the gate of the fold, being admitted, and leading His sheep out to pasture and in to safety. It is hard to doubt that Jesus took this simple pastoral event as a symbol of Himself coming into the life of mankind through the gate of death and resurrection. The verses which follow the parable itself, containing such explanation and expansion as are suitable to critical hearers, seem to be conclusive. The Good Shepherd, through giving His life for the sheep, becomes Himself the Gate¹ of the sheep. As we read the parable in the light of the words which follow it, we seem to see the Good Shepherd starting from His home while it is yet dark, braving the perils of the wilderness by night that He may reach the gate of the fold by break of day. He comes to bring salvation in the twofold sense of security and life.

The most perilous part of the journey is the

¹ John x. 7. I venture to differ from Dr. Moffatt here.

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approach to the gate. The enemy, knowing that shepherds come there about dawn, are lying in wait for them. For that reason, shepherds often travelled in company in the dark, but we see this Shepherd coming alone. The wild forces of the wilderness gather all their strength against Him, but He is not to be turned aside from His task. He confronts the powers of evil with a holy love which can suffer, and redeem through suffering, and so He gives His life for the sheep. Just outside the gate we seem to see a Cross, as if it were on that hill outside the gate at Jerusalem. By the way of the gate, for this is God's way, Jesus comes into the life of man. For "to Him the keeper of the gate openeth." The gate swings open and He passes from the Cross, through resurrection, to the throne of God and of men's lives. He has now become the Gate itself through which men may enter into life eternal.

We come now to that aspect of the parable which bears upon our immediate subject. Had Jesus any definite equivalent in His mind for the keeper of the gate? We heartily agree with those who think that He had and that the equivalent was the Holy Spirit. Guided and inspired by Him, Jesus was carrying the battle to the gate; by Him also, therefore, He would be admitted at the gate, with new and saving power, into the life of His people. To the change wrought by the Spirit

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upon Jesus in virtue of His obedience unto death there would answer a change in the Spirit Himself in His saving function for men. Jesus was to be the Way to the Father, and the Truth and the Life as well. The function of the Spirit was to pass from ministering to men the benefits of a system to ministering the benefits of a living Saviour. The Holy Spirit was to be the Spirit of Jesus. Through giving the Holy Spirit full sway in Himself, even unto death, Jesus received from God the power to exercise a new sway of the Spirit in human lives. We submit that this is the meaning of the parable of the Good Shepherd and that it represents the mind of Jesus regarding His redeeming work for men.

It may be felt as an objection to this interpretation of the parable that, if Jesus were thinking of the Holy Spirit at the time, He would have made His thoughts more explicit. Why does He not mention the Spirit in His expansion of the parable? The answer is that though such thoughts filled His mind He did not forget the situation in which He was expressing them. What He wished those self-willed men to understand was that their religion was the antithesis of His own. His way was God's way and theirs was not. It was the way of suffering love, and it would be justified by the salvation which it would bring to men. He was speaking the deepest truth in a tone of defiance which would

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either soften or harden the hearts of those who listened. It was one of the challenging sayings which He uttered towards the end, sayings which forced His hearers to a decision about Him. Nothing was to be gained by giving them any rationale of the Cross or any instruction with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit. His one purpose was to set the Cross in bold relief against the conventional religion of the time, and in doing this He has given us, incidentally but most impressively, a glimpse into His thought regarding the place of the Holy Spirit in the work which He was about to do for men.

This leads to a point of much importance. To maintain that it is the Holy Spirit alone who applies the benefits of Christ to men is far from implying that He should be preached to men in place of Jesus. The preaching which played an essential part in the founding of the Christian Church directed the eyes of men to the crucified and risen Christ, and the preaching which is to deepen and expand the life of the Church to-day must do the same. It is the work of the Spirit so to generate understanding and faith and penitence in us that we shall welcome and cherish Christ as the one and only Lord and Saviour of our lives. Preaching must direct itself to that same end. But the preacher of the Gospel who allows himself to be ignorant or forgetful of the only power which can make his words effective in the lives of his

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hearers is a preacher who misses the mark. It is true that an academic belief in the Holy Spirit will neither save a man nor help him to preach, but it is also true that apart from belief in the Holy Spirit the nerve of preaching is absent. It is fatally easy to fall into the futility of egotism on the one hand or into that of despair on the other, and the sense of the Spirit's presence saves us from both. It is not reasonable to contend that if a man is filled with the Spirit he does not need to think of the Spirit. Faithful exercise of the mind upon the truth of the Gospel inevitably brings us to thoughts about the Holy Spirit. The religious interest of the Gospel cannot be long sustained when its intellectual interest fades, and besides, experience has shown that the men who have preached Christ most effectively have been those who strove, consciously and diligently, to keep themselves in the power of the Spirit.

CHAPTER V

The Will of God

THE Will of God has been frequently referred to in the preceding chapters and we must now concentrate upon it if we are to make progress with an intellectual interpretation of the redemptive work of Christ. Fortunately, the Will of God is a phrase which can be used unambiguously in many vital connections; but unfortunately, we cannot afford to employ it for systematic purposes without saying what we mean by it. As a conception, it varies as widely as the gamut of existence. To take two extreme instances, it is made on the one hand to cover all that is. The Will of God is whatever happens, all events and persons, all good and evil. This, of course, is fatalism, and approximations to extreme fatalism are so frequent that there must be some germ of truth in it. The germ lies in the obvious fact that God permits all that happens. Here, therefore, the Will of God is made equivalent to what He permits. This, to say the least of it, is very unilluminating. In point of fact, it takes a phrase which ought to mean something and applies it to that which means nothing at all. On the other hand, the phrase is often used to denote all

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that God desires to happen. If everything were "done in earth as it is in heaven," we should then have a complete manifestation of the Will of God. This conception may serve some purpose, but it would be well if some other name were given to it, say, the Unbroken Will of God. For it is an entirely ideal conception. A world in which everything has happened according to God's desire is a world of which we know nothing. We must reckon with the grim fact, which is assumed in the Lord's Prayer, that God's Will has been violated on earth, and then our chief question comes to be about God's Will in that disordered situation.

The conception of the Will of God to which we are thus led occupies a place between the two conceptions outlined above. God does not will sin, but, the fact of sin being presupposed, He wills something concerning sin. His Will for us takes for granted what we are. It is therefore His desire and purpose for us in a situation which is complicated by evil. That it is partly a question of terminology appears, for example, when we ask regarding the father in the parable of The Lost Son, whether it was his will that the lad should take his journey into a far country. Either answer, yes or no, might be defended with success, but neither answer is suitable if we accept our definition of the Will of God. In one sense it was, and in another sense it was not, the father's will that the lad should go.

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The son's unfilial spirit was a complete violation of his father's will, but in the situation created by that false spirit it was best that he should be permitted to go, and to that limited extent his departure was according to the father's will. In our way of looking at it, the Will of God is hampered but not baffled by evil. In normal circumstances, if it gets through at all to the life of man, it only gets through partially. Often it is like the will of the father in the parable that his boy should go and suffer, and it is always like the will of the same father that the boy should return home.

A. MAN AND THE WILL OF GOD.

The meaning and value of this conception of the Will of God can be best shown by a consideration of it in its most vital relations, and we begin with its relation to the life of man. That we ourselves have wills which can either put us farther away from God, or else bring us nearer to Him, than anything else in creation, implies that we have a part to play in fulfilling the Will of God. If freedom is a reality at all, our wills must be ours in order that we may lay them alongside that of God and get His Will done. His Will is therefore something which awaits fulfilment in and through us. It is active, but its activity is modified and hampered by our failures. It is a discouraging thought that there is an element of failure in our best purposes and

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actions, but such discouragement is merged in the joy which comes with the assurance that to the extent of our faithfulness, God fulfils His Will through us. Faith begets hope, and the heart which has hope cannot be joyless. God is gracious, and when we do our best, He does great things for us.

God thus calls men into partnership with Himself for the fulfilment of His will on earth. We cannot deny this partnership if we are to avoid determinism on the one hand and secularism on the other. It is the religious equivalent of the scientific principle that there comes a point in evolution at which the object of evolution becomes a subject as well as an object, a point, that is to say, where man must take a conscious part in his own evolution. That point is admittedly critical and precarious, but the responsibility which it brings to man cannot be repudiated. We are called to partnership with God and we must give some answer, be it for weal or woe. When we give faith's answer we put ourselves on the side of God and all things are possible to us.

It is necessary to guard against the mistake of supposing that in this high partnership the work of God is to be wholly construed by what man does or proposes to do. God is the Great Worker in all human affairs, and when He finds a human will which is a fitting instrument of His own, He has a medium through which He can do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." When

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we are co-workers with God, the unpremeditated results of our work far surpass anything that we intend to do. We often set out to do something which seems worth while and we put our whole heart in it too, and yet the visible result may look like a complete failure. But if we have really been working with God, we have no right to talk of failure. There are unseen results of enriching consequence to ourselves and therefore to others as well. Much is said in these days about the selfishness of attending to one's own salvation, but it is as obvious as anything can be that the best service a man can render his fellows is to become good and great himself. He cannot bless others until he is himself blessed. True, he cannot be blessed except he try to bless others, but then he may try and fail, or seem to fail. The point is, however, that there is no real failure in such a case. It is often through apparent failure more than through success that one develops for himself the kind of character which will by and by bear rich fruit in other lives. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes."

The unpremeditated results of working together with God are not always unseen. They are the daily experience of the man of God. Who has not had the experience of doing a little kindness to another for Christ's sake—and when it is done for His sake it is always done naturally and gracefully—

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and of being surprised to find how it has been multiplied? The Gospel story of the boy who surrendered his five barley loaves and two small fish, and thus became the means of feeding five thousand men, has had many a parallel in Christian lives. A little one can easily become a thousand when God is with the little one. God is the Great Worker and no man's efforts or purposes are the measure of His Work. He loves to do and to give lavishly, and when His Church rediscovers that this is so and learns to trust less to the arm of flesh, she will be great again. Nothing has yet happened in this foolish and bewildered world to make the Christian conviction incredible that when God gets the kind of human will which He seeks He can bless all mankind through it.

The recognition of the unpremeditated results of man's work in partnership with God disposes of the objection that the idea of such a partnership limits the Will of God by making its fulfilment dependent in any sense upon man. It also disposes of an idea which is bred by a temper of a very different sort, the idea of a limited God. But if the arguments which spring from either of those tempers decline to be so easily silenced, they can be successfully met on other grounds which are possibly more suitable to them. The limits within which the Will of God is hampered by the unresponsiveness of man are strictly defined. History,

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which writes its admonitions in large letters, makes that abundantly clear. Nations and empires and civilizations have gone down like houses of cards upon reaching the limit set inexorably by the final Disposer of the destinies of men and nations. Men may fill up the cup of their iniquity and smile all the time, but it is only a cup after all, and the moment it is full their smile goes out with themselves, like a candle in the wind. God's Will is supreme in heaven and on earth. And if He bears with us awhile, gives us a chance to obey and trust and love Him, and, when we grasp our opportunity, crowns our lives with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, we shall not say when things go awry that He is only a limited God after all. We shall say that He is straitened in us and that His name is Almighty Love. For His love is almighty although it cannot coerce a single human heart. Its might is proved wherever it is received.

B. SIN AND THE WILL OF GOD.

We have thus been brought to the relation of sin to the Will of God. Sin is that element in human life which ought not to be, and which tends to reduce life to a mockery of what it is meant to be. It is that which, consciously or unconsciously, opposes the Will of God. Its definition in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is admirable: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression

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of, the law of God." Only we must here give "law" its whole depth and range. For us the definition is more thoroughgoing when we substitute "the Will of God" for "the Law of God." This makes the tremendous scope of sin more explicit. It answers to Paul's definition: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."¹ The relation of sin to the Will of God is one of opposition. Sin works against God. Why there should be anything which works against God is the darkest of all unanswerable questions. All that we can know about it in this life is that, when we are on God's side, we range ourselves against His enemy and ours.

Our purpose in these studies does not oblige us to enter the hard enquiry into the origin of human sin. Probably nothing more profound will ever be written on that subject than what is written in the third chapter of Genesis. There we have a pictorial representation of the race passing from a state of innocence to a state of guilt. In the emergence of a child from the state of innocence, the first appearance of conscience always takes the form of a bad conscience and is hardly less of a mystery than the corresponding phenomenon in the larger life of the race. We get no farther on by probing origins here. Sin is the tragic fact. The parable in Genesis, however, presupposes that behind human sin there is a superhuman power of evil. It is symbolised by

¹ Rom. xiv. 23.

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the serpent, and this symbolism suggests that it is both natural and supernatural. It is a force which comes from below and invades man's life with a power greater than his own. If the modern mind has got away from the truth which is expressed in this symbolism, it will require to come back to it again. The facts of nature and the facts of human life conspire to show that behind human sin there is a force working to produce it, a force which is intelligent, malignant, powerful. This is neither Zoroastrianism nor Manicheanism. It is the recognition of the obvious tragedy which is being enacted in the transitory order to which we belong.

The allocation of responsibility for sin does not belong to our discussion any more than the enquiry into its origin. It is taken for granted that the whole responsibility for an individual's sin does not rest upon the individual himself. The upas-tree of a man's sin has many roots. First there is heredity, which connects him not only with the particular line by which he has come, but also with human nature and ultimately with nature itself. The redemptive forces which have been at work in the history of his antecedents must also be taken into account, but the fact remains that he has behind him many generations of sinful folk. Even at the best, we enter a heritage which has been soiled by the sins of others. Then there is the child's home environment. It seems that, in the first four years

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of his life, seeds are sown which tend persistently throughout life to produce their appropriate harvest. The momentum imparted by those earliest years may be arrested, but it can only be by a force which has extraordinary power behind it. Children who are born and bred in homes which do not deserve the name have little chance. Their only chance lies in their society-environment and in the redemptive forces which are at work there. The misery is that they are apt to move in a society which is as bad as their homes. Often it is worse, and so we have the pitiful down-grade of life. At the present moment it is hard, even for children who have had a good chance at home, to remain unspotted from the world. The devil is very busy to-day, and very prosperous.

The mind which dwells disproportionately on these sombre facts soon begins to ask whether anyone is really responsible for his sins. Man begins to be an object of self-pity, a helpless creature tossed to and fro upon a devouring waste. It is interesting to find, however, that self-excuse usually springs from a much less creditable source. Of all the foolish evasions in the world, surely self-excuse is the most prevalent. People who have never given a moment's thought to heredity or environment are ready, with an alacrity which would be astounding were we not so familiar with it, to give a formidable array of excuses for their evil conduct. They may produce as many as half-a-dozen such excuses,

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without caring in the very least whether they are compatible with one another or not. They must find excuses, and the excuses always come with a rush. If they cannot be found in the line of truth, another line is quickly exploited. This inveterate and well-nigh universal human habit provides, next to the kindred habit of self-deception, the strongest of all confirmations of the stranglehold which the unseen power of evil has upon human beings. In the eyes of God there is no excuse for sin. Whoever else or whatever else shares the responsibility, we bear our own responsibility for our own sin. Unless we are prepared to maintain that a human being is and has always been an absolute slave to persons and things outside of himself, which means our denial that he is a human being at all, we must hold that he is responsible for his sins. If he is not responsible for his sins, he is responsible for nothing. It all seems plain enough, in spite of the fact that our age has raised a smoke-screen in front of it.

We must now turn to the reverse side of the shield and ask what is the relation of the Will of God to sin. Of course it also is one of opposition. God works against sin ; but how ? This brings us to the subject of the divine reactions against sin, and it is useful to begin by looking at these reactions as they are to be found in common experience. First, there is the bad conscience. We ought to take

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both the fact and the validity of the bad conscience for granted. The man who has committed sin deserves to be miserable over it, and if he is not so, it is because his badness is telling its tale in the hardening of his heart. The pretence that the bad conscience is due to dyspepsia or hypersensitiveness or disordered nerves is one of the many evasions by which people deliberately deceive themselves and try to make their escape from God.

When the bad conscience consistently fails to evoke repentance and amendment, the process of searing sets in, and the end of this process is the seared conscience. This is a further stage in the divine reaction against sin. The soul of the man has now grown callous and insensitive. He can sin without compunction. His moral nature has gradually toppled down till nothing but the foundations remain—and the ruins. The ruins may be conspicuous to all beholders and to himself, but on the other hand they may escape observation, even by himself, either because of their hidden nature or because of the gradualness of the dissolving process. Outward decency often hides inward corruption. It is more frequently true of a man's soul than of his head, that "grey hairs are here and there upon him and he knoweth it not." In any case, the seared conscience is what Paul was thinking of when, thrice in the same chapter,¹ he wrote

¹ Rom. i.

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concerning the reprobate Gentiles: "God gave them over." In more modern but less telling language, it is the inevitable reaction of the moral order against persistent disobedience. The moral order is as inexorable as the natural order. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."¹ Sin begets more sin, and whatever the rest of its progeny may be like, the deadliest of the brood is the sin of blindness and hardness which so easily leads to the sin which cannot be forgiven.

In spite of what has been said, the man of the seared conscience is not happy. He may be happier than he deserves to be, but that is not saying much. He has his peculiar distress for which the Bible has the appropriate name: "leanness of soul."² His soul, which was meant to have food suitable to its nature, is made to feed on husks, and its condition answers to those living skeletons who are the victims of famine. Symptoms of its disorder appear in many forms, the palling of pleasures, the feverish hunt for something still more exciting, fear where there is no ground for fear, a growing weariness of life, and that undefinable misery which is the hardest of all to deal with, because it has its roots away back in some wrong deed which is now irreparable and even unremembered. The sickness of the soul asserts itself in a host of ways, and yet the soul is slow to search beneath the symptoms for a root cause

¹ Gal. vi. 7.

² Ps. cvi. 15.

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of all the trouble. Leanness of soul is the most obvious of all the divine reactions in the world to-day. It makes men and classes and nations seek wrong ends, or right ends in the wrong way. But until the root of its trouble is dealt with, the soul must grow more and more sick. If there is no healing, it becomes a sickness unto death. The death of the soul is the last of the divine reactions in this present order. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."¹

There is no intention here to confine the divine reactions against sin to the purely spiritual realm. In point of fact there is nothing which is purely spiritual in human life, just as there is nothing which is purely natural. Our life is a unity and it is futile to seek for a hard and fast line between the natural and spiritual parts of it. The question is sometimes asked, especially in the case of a criminal, where moral responsibility stops and natural inevitableness begins. In so far as this question refers to the realities of life it must imply that, in a career of crime, a point is gradually reached at which the ascendancy of the moral yields to that of the natural, or else that something which is vital to personality suddenly snaps and the moral ceases to be. In the former case, the fact that the moral is no longer in the ascendant does not liberate the person from his moral responsibility; in the latter case,

¹ James i. 15.

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personality is submerged and the individual must be treated as an irresponsible. But the modern tendency to identify moral obliquity with mental insanity is in the last resort a refusal to recognise the place of the moral order in human life. The moral order is never ignored but it has its revenge. We are bound to recognise the supremacy of the moral order, in its goodness and in its severity, among human beings. We can and must do this while maintaining that divine reactions against sin do not leave the physical side of man unscathed. The physical reactions against sensuality usually come quickly ; against sins like pride, selfishness, jealousy, hatred, they may come slowly, but they come surely. "Thy judgments are a great deep."¹

The general nature of the divine reaction against sin, and especially its relation to the redemptive purpose of God, must now be considered. Paul calls it "the wrath of God," *ὀργὴ θεοῦ*,² a phrase which should not be understood too anthropomorphically. It is often taken summarily for granted that Paul is here contemplating an attitude in which God for the time lays aside His love and acts like a man who has lost his temper. We may be quite sure that Paul the Apostle never thought of God after this fashion. Why should there not be allowed to Paul's "He gave them over," *παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς*,³ a recognition of God as working

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 6.

² Rom. i. 18, etc.

³ Rom. i. 24, etc.

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in His complete character? Abstraction may be a necessity, but it need not be a vice, of human thinking and it can only be prevented from becoming a vice by the constant remembrance that it *is* abstraction. We are able to think of wrath *simpliciter*, partly from our abnormally developed faculty for abstracting, and partly from the frequency with which we have seen people consumed by anger. But we have to curb the violence of our abstractions when we are thinking of God. It does not make His wrath less real that it is always the wrath of holy love. Is not "the wrath of the Lamb" the most tremendous phrase in the New Testament? We must believe that love is the essence of the divine character, but within that essence we must leave room for wrath. Divine love is not something which stops when divine wrath begins. As soon as we think of it doing so, we misunderstand both the love and the wrath. It is to be suspected that the prevalent misconception of the New Testament doctrine of the love of God has the same root as the corresponding misconception of His wrath.

Alike in Scripture and in experience there is abundant testimony to the truth that the divine reaction against sin bears a positive relation to the divine energy of redemption. It is sometimes supposed to be a modern discovery that the punishment of criminals is most effective, which means that it is most remedial, when it has an

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organic connection with the crime committed, but the revelation of God's wrath which is declared in the New Testament has fully anticipated this alleged discovery of criminology. The judgments of God are neither arbitrary nor artificial. It may equally be said of them that they spring from the nature of the sin which is judged and that they spring from the character of the Judge. Principal Denney has deprecated the refusal to recognise anything in the Gospel which is not given explicitly in the parable of the Lost Son. At the same time, we should not be too sure that we have recognised everything that is in that parable. For example, we dare not put too little into the father's mood from the moment when the younger son took his journey into the far country. Explicitly the father takes no initiative at this point, but surely we are warranted in supplying a *παρέδωκεν αὐτόν* at this part of the parable. "He gave him over" to the indulgence of foolish passion and to the trouble which such indulgence would inevitably bring. We rightly dwell upon the sorrow which must have torn the father's heart, but we are too apt to assume that the sorrow was inactive and ineffective. The father made a moral decision when he let the boy go. The boy must learn something from the pressure of his sin's reactions, and while it was not possible under the limits imposed by the aim and form of the parable to

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represent his miseries as having any positive relation to his father's will, we cannot afford to omit that aspect of the facts if we are determined to make the father's will in the parable stand for the Will of God. It is the joy of God over one sinner repenting, and not His initiative in that repentance, that is the theme of the parable, but the refusal to recognise the divine initiative there is just the familiar folly of selecting one aspect of our Lord's teaching about God for the purpose of rejecting another aspect of that same teaching.

The divine reaction against sin must not be put out of relation to the energy of divine redemption. It is a denial of the God of Jesus to think of His love otherwise than as pressing in upon the life of man. It is true that apart from Jesus and His Cross the conception of the love of God as the ultimate force behind the life of man would seem but a daring flight of the imagination. Here as elsewhere we look from the Cross rather than to it. But as we see a star on a dark night by the light which streams from itself, it is permissible to use the light which the Cross sheds upon all else as our medium for seeing the Cross. There is no other medium by which we can see it as it really is. The love of God has always been insistent for the redemption of men. It is like the sunlight which pervades all earthly spaces in which there is no contrivance to shut it out. But even the sunlight simile fails, as all

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figures do somewhere, in that it has only a negative relation to the dark spaces which it is not permitted to enter. God's love pierces human barriers and pursues souls into their very darkness. All reactions against sin are divine reactions and love has a relation to them which is very real. The moral order is supremely God's order. It consists of the moral law, in the widest and deepest acceptance of the term, and of reaction against the violation of that law. The law is itself spiritual, good, redemptive. In the language of Deuteronomy, it is "for our good always."¹ In the reaction we have the displeasure of love, far removed from the arbitrary and artificial and resentful way of angry men, but always real, sorrow-laden, terrible. To deny this moral order, or to say that either law or reaction is not of God, is to deny God.

There is one point more, apart from which any study of divine reaction against sin would be very incomplete. The New Testament declares that sin may become unpardonable. When it has reached this stage it is variously described as "the blasphemy against the Spirit,"² or "an eternal sin,"³ or "a sin unto death."⁴ The references to it are not numerous, but the shadow of it is a dark background which is never absent from the New Testament. A. B. Bruce defines it as the sin of

¹ Deut. vi. 24.

² Matt. xii. 31.

³ Mk. iii. 29.

⁴ 1 Jn. v. 16.

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impenitence and implacability, and this seems a true interpretation of what Jesus meant by it. Opposition to the action of God's redemptive energy may be carried to a point at which it becomes final opposition. A man may be so persistently false to the light which is in him that the very light itself becomes darkness. The roots from which alone penitence can spring are destroyed and the man becomes incapable of response to the overtures of divine love. His day of opportunity is at an end. There are those who think that the opportunity of a man or a nation or a civilization should never stop, but all the facts of life are against them. There is only a day of opportunity.

"Be the day short, or be it long,
At length it ringeth to evensong."

The doom of those who finally reject the grace of God is written, both on the New Testament and on life, with a pen of iron, and there is no kind of criticism which can erase it.

This might seem to destroy our thesis that the reaction of God is always remedial. If, against obdurate and settled impenitence, there is a final reaction which holds no redemptive element, we must to that extent qualify our thesis. But in dealing with the fact and nature of the Christian redemption, we are concerned with a definite sphere in which that redemption holds. It does not make God's grace less wonderful that its sweep, covering

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our day of opportunity, does not extend beyond that day. The only grace of God of which we know anything is that which is projected first of all upon the field of human history. The moral struggle with its acceptance or rejection of grace takes place upon that same field. It is therefore not only an academic futility but also a distortion of the meaning of redemption to affect a knowledge of opportunities to be given on the other side to those who have had their day of opportunity on this side. Whatever cuts the nerve of moral endeavour or blurs the decisiveness of moral choice is likely to be wrong. And if a man, sinning persistently against light and love, goes to his own place while he is still in the land of the living, that in no way affects the conviction that God reacts against sin for the sinner's redemption so long as the day of redemption lasts. We have nothing to do with determining, in any particular case, when the day of grace comes to an end. On the contrary, we are bound to act upon the assumption that all men are within the scope of God's mercy. But we are equally bound to assume that it is possible for us to sin ourselves beyond the reach of mercy. In the same way, while we hold that the relation of the Will of God to that which finally opposes it is one of those limit-conceptions before which we bow our heads, we must also hold that the final rejection of God is life's last and greatest tragedy.

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C. JESUS AND THE WILL OF GOD.

None can read the Gospels attentively without gaining the impression that the secret of the personality of Jesus lay in His conscious harmony with the Will of God. This harmony was personal and ethical, and both the music and the meaning of it get lost through the importation into it of ideas about metaphysical or mathematical identity. Jesus had a will which was His own ; otherwise there would be no sense in speaking of its harmony with the Will of God or of the reality of His humanity. As we look at Jesus we see One who felt that His own Will was in perfect accord with the Will of His Father. What greatly heightens the impressiveness of the sight and adds verisimilitude to the picture is the perfect naturalness with which He takes His place as One who knew the Will of God at every step of His way and found His meat and drink in the doing of it.

Jesus, at the beginning of His public ministry, offered Himself for baptism at the hands of John. This step on His part was open to misinterpretation, and yet He took it as the most suitable way of associating Himself with the historical process of redemption in Israel and of pledging Himself to God and man. There, at a critical point in His spiritual experience, He set His seal, and received His Father's seal, to His consciousness of a unique vocation on

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behalf of men, and to His resolve to fulfil that vocation. His baptism was at least the outward symbol of His inward consecration. He knew that it was the Will of God that a new redeeming work should be accomplished for men, and He knew that He Himself had a solitary part to play in that work. In His baptism He thus identified Himself with the Will of God for our redemption. Here we have the two governing affirmations about the Will of God : (1) that it is energetic for man's redemption ; (2) that it fulfils itself through a will which is consecrated to it in human life.

The self-dedication which Jesus made at His baptism must be taken into connection with His attitude to the Will of God throughout the whole course of His ministry. The wonder of the contrasts in His character has been admirably exhibited by several recent writers, and no contrast is more wonderful than in His way of being absorbed in the eternal and alive to each moment as it came. No doubt it is in our ignorance that we feel a strong contrast there. To the mind of Jesus these were not contrasts, but complements to each other. We do not see the passing moment as it really is until we see it sparkling in the light of the eternal, like a dew-drop taking the whole sun into its bosom. Nor do we see the eternal as it really is until we have learned to see it in each flying moment. Jesus, just because He moved with majestic ease in the

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eternal, was intensely interested in every step of the way as His new opportunity for seeing and doing the Will of God. The future had its unknown factors even for Him, and as those factors unfolded themselves before Him, we can see Him meeting them, sometimes with joy, sometimes with disappointment and sadness, but always with attention and wonder and with the clear and calm consciousness that here there opened up a new path by following which He could do the Will of God.

This made the life of Jesus in pre-eminent degree the life of adventure, although in saying so we need to deepen the idea of adventure which prevails to-day. A striking illustration of this habit of His mind is given in His dealing with blind Bartimæus.¹ He was absorbed at the time in His mission to Jerusalem, for it was His last journey thither and thoughts of the end threw Him into deep emotion. The shadow of the Cross had already fallen on Him. From Mark's account we gather that emotion quickened His step,² and we may be sure that it set its impress upon His face. His mood was tense. Perhaps it was because the people of Jericho noticed it that they ordered their noisy beggar to be quiet. In any case there is an undercurrent of surprise in the narrative that Jesus did what He did. He was neither too busy nor too absorbed to stop and help a poor sufferer who was eager to be helped. He had

¹ Mk. x. 46.

² Mk. x. 32.

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always leisure enough to attend to the circumstance of the moment. We say it was the urge of His pity, and so it was ; but that only heightens the wonder of His consciousness. It was through the eyes of God that He saw everywhere opportunities to do the Will of God.

The illustration just quoted reminds us that, as the end drew near, the strain upon the Will of Jesus grew more intense. The full import of the strain in which the Cross involved Him, will be discussed in a future chapter ; meanwhile, it is to be noted that the pledge which He gave at His baptism committed Him to a task whose difficulty grew ever greater until it ended in His death. As He watched for new pathways by which He might fulfil the Will of God, He found each of them leading unfailingly towards the hard, untrodden way of the Cross. The way of adventure became more and more for Him the dolorous way. We must not shrink from the historical fact that He found it increasingly difficult to do the Will of His Father. It is not that the Will of Jesus was less attuned to perfect love or less resolute towards perfect obedience than on the day of His baptism. Rather we must hold that as the Will of God revealed itself to Him and He accepted it freely, His Will became more and more nearly a replica of His Father's Will. But, as harmony melted into deeper harmony, the process involved the world's Redeemer in deepening

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pain. Through naught but death could the harmony become perfect. The redeeming Will of God could only be fulfilled by the Redeemer at a great cost.

It belonged to the consciousness of Jesus that He had come to fulfil the law and the prophets.¹ We gather this from His whole bearing as well as from His reported words. When He gave utterance to this consciousness in the Sermon on the Mount, He seemed to feel that His disciples would understand quite well what was meant by His fulfilment of the prophets, but that He must make clear to them what He meant by His fulfilment of the law. So we find Him going on to emphasise and illustrate His relation to the law. The purpose of the law was good and its direction true ; but its purpose needed to be ripened and its direction continued to its goal, and this twofold need was met in Jesus. The law was spiritual from the first, but the meaning and depth of its spirituality could only be revealed in One for whom its essence was not in outward regulations, but in inward dispositions. Jesus spoke the last word about the law. Once He had spoken, the law could never again be anything short of the true heart. It was fulfilled in love. It was fulfilled in Him.

That the law was fully declared in Jesus is part of what we mean when we say that in Him God was declared. The education of the moral sense of the race in history took place concurrently with

¹ Matt. v. 17.

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the development of the idea of God. The revelation of God to man carried with it both the revelation of what God requires of man and the revelation of man to himself. In Jesus this threefold revelation was consummated. We need not here appraise the preceding revelation or make any difficulty over questions raised by the comparative study of religions. That Jesus took His place as "the Branch of David" and that He fed His soul upon the Hebrew Scriptures did not shut Him out from the broader stream of human life. The tributary which we call the faith of Israel passed in Him to the river which flows over the whole earth. We may be permitted to take for granted both the uniqueness of the divine revelation granted to Israel and the universality which marked the religious and ethical teaching of Jesus.

We have spoken of the revelation *in* Jesus rather than of the revelation *by* Jesus, because the former both includes and transcends the latter. It is not enough to affirm that He taught men who God is and what the law is. In Him man learned to see God and find the law. In the Old Testament we can study the ways of God with men. There we can see revelation working through the history which consists of events, and of the achievement and interpretation of events by men of faith. History without colour is not history at all. No one should demand colourless history, but all should demand

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that history should appear in its true colour ; and a true interpretation of history must be religious for the simple reason that God is the Great Worker in history. It should not be claimed that the interpretation of history in the Old Testament is perfect, but it can be claimed that it is on the right lines. It is on the right lines in so far as the interpreters' thoughts of God were true ; it is imperfect in proportion to the imperfection in their thoughts of God. In Jesus we have the perfect attitude to God, which, of course, includes the perfect thought of God. The conditions of a perfect revelation of God were at last present on earth when there appeared One whose Will was in unbroken harmony with the divine Will. The Will of God cannot be wholly done until it is wholly known, and he alone can get to know it wholly who has never failed in the doing of it. It is essential to see not only what a suitable means God had in Jesus for revealing Himself, but also what immeasurable consequences must flow to men from the presence among them, even if it only be at one point in history, of the conditions which are favourable to the perfect word and work of God.

We are thus led to a conception of the Will of God as the divine redeeming energy which is always seeking to achieve its purposes and which is able to achieve them on earth whenever it finds there the welcome which it requires. Faith releases that

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energy and great things are done. The energy is intensely personal and therefore the faith which appropriates it must be intensely personal too. No one without a great faith is entitled to say that a particular circumstance in his life is to be attributed to the Will of God. There is a sort of inclined plane down which it is easy to slide into the slough of fatalism. When something is done which cannot be undone, there can be no harm in saying that God has permitted that to happen. But there is harm in saying indiscriminately that our experiences represent the Will of God. It is something which is even worse than an untruth to attribute to that most holy and loving Will some false temper in ourselves or some characteristic vice of one's country or such a debasing human habit as war. It is certain that the Will of God has been active in the moral order according to which one evil begets another, but it is equally certain that it is always remedially active. It is the Will of God that all evil should cease. To take any other view is to paralyse the energies of the soul and think unworthily of God. We therefore define the Will of God for us as His personal, holy and loving activity, directed towards us for the ends of our salvation, and appropriated by our faith; and we are prepared to see in the Cross of Jesus both the culmination of God's redemptive activity and the inspiration of man's faith.

CHAPTER VI

The Cross of Jesus and the Will of God

THE CROSS of Jesus was an event in the history of the human race. That statement is a commonplace, but as such it has not always been given its full weight. When it is said, for instance, that the Cross is an eternal event, we have a truth which passes over to a falsehood as soon as it is taken to mean that the eternal character of the event lifts the event out of time. A real religious interest is secured by holding that the Cross of Jesus is a symbol of the suffering love of God as a universal fact. This conviction helps many to realise how the reconciling work of Christ is made effective in the life of the race and not confined to one point of time. It helps others to feel how intensely Christ sympathises with them in their struggles and how keenly He suffers for their sins. There is a religious pragmatism which assumes that anything which helps them in their religious life must not only be true, but must also be the whole truth. But it is always pertinent to ask whether the same religious interest cannot be secured, and better secured, some other way, while it is always useful to remember the danger of arguing from what is profitable to what is true. Nothing

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should be allowed to cast the historical character of the sufferings and death of Jesus into the shade. It is well, in arranging our thoughts of His Cross, to begin by letting its historical setting sink deep into the mind. We shall deal with that setting in its three most relevant aspects.

A. THE CROSS AND THE LIFE OF JESUS.

The chief link of the Cross with history is the historical Jesus, and we dare not isolate His Cross from His life. There is no call to vindicate this statement, for there is little disposition to-day, as there once was, to abstract His death from His Person in such a way as to lose sight of the moral facts of the situation. In the Cross we are face to face with the death of *Jesus*, and it is fully recognised that its secret remains hidden from the eyes which are not filled with the glory of His Person. But it is not superfluous to point out that it is here more than anywhere else that the modern Church may make its contribution to the interpretation of the Cross. The searchlights which have been turned upon the historical Jesus, whatever effect they may have produced on other minds, have certainly brought out for many the unmistakable glory of that life. Here we can only attempt a brief outline of those elements in the earthly life of Jesus which have a special importance for our subject.

The public ministry of Jesus opened with His

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baptism by John. In that baptism, as has already¹ been pointed out, He accepted His vocation as Saviour. He pledged Himself to His Father's Will for men in the same act in which He pledged Himself to make common cause with men. In one act, which was also an experience, love to man and obedience to the Will of God met together. What His accepted vocation was to mean for Him was not known to Him in detail. For such knowledge He had to wait upon His Father's Will as it emerged in the busy loom of life. That it was to mean suffering and rejection was not unknown to Him, but what form were those experiences to take? There is good ground in the Gospels for holding that in the earlier part of His ministry He entertained the hope that He might win His own nation to Himself. Before long He began to see that this was unlikely and His disappointment appears in such parables as that of *The Sower*. By this time it was made plain, not only that bitter opposition was to be encountered from the rulers, but also that the people as a whole were not disposed towards the kind of response which He desired. Keen to see and hear Him, and especially to avail themselves of the benefits of His healing ministry, they became dull and listless and ultimately angry as He pressed upon them the spiritual nature and demands of His message. At first He probably assumed that the persecution would

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 159.

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come from Rome, whose dominion, founded upon force, would be challenged by His Gospel of Love. Gradually, however, events compelled Him to see that He was to be rejected even by His own nation.

It was a point of departure in His ministry when He was called to face the fact that His own people were to take the lead in rejecting Him. We can see the shadows deepening and lengthening for His spirit when He reached this settled conviction. As He thought about the end, its bitterness was intensified for Him from that time onwards. It is only the Fourth Gospel that tells us of the attempt on the part of the people to compel Him to be their king,¹ but this is one of several instances in which that Gospel sheds a welcome light upon the synoptic records. The synoptists make it plain that, after the miracle of *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*, a new intensity of feeling, amounting almost to an agony, crept over the soul of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel supplies the explanation. The crowds were bent upon forcing Him to fulfil their social and political ambitions, while He was bent upon something vastly different. They were after the bread of the body ; He yearned to give them the bread of the soul. His refusal to take their way was a decisive point, alike in their attitude to Him and in the course of His ministry. Soon afterwards "He set His face stedfastly to go

¹ Jn. vi. 15.

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to Jerusalem." Henceforth the shadow of the Cross lay very dark upon His spirit.

We must not miss the impression, conveyed by all the Evangelists, of the change of mood which came to Jesus at this point of departure in His ministry. Up to that point, though always courageous and firm, He was on the whole conciliatory towards the religious leaders who were critical of Him. He seems to have been anxious to avoid antagonising them beyond what was absolutely necessary. But now He adopted a more positive attitude towards them, amounting at times to defiance. His denunciations were vehement and His silences were those of defiant majesty. It would not be true to say that He ever courted the enmity of anybody. Indeed, it is not to be doubted that even His terrible words of denunciation held at their heart a clinging hope that His warnings might at least be heeded by some. His lament over Jerusalem would of itself forbid us to suppose that His indignation ever lacked the savour of pitying love. The records make it quite clear that up to the very end He remembered His task of bringing whom He could to a right mind. It is better to see in His change of mood an indication of His resolve to compel men to a decision regarding Himself. Many had already decided the matter inwardly. It was now His aim to bring the nation as a whole to a decision in action.

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We are reassured of the essential historical trustworthiness of all the Evangelists by the naturalness with which they represent Jesus as keeping the moral initiative in His own hand. It is impossible to feel, in any of the Gospels, that in His Passion He was a creature of circumstances. It is as the Master of circumstance that we see Him treading every inch of His way to the Cross. To say that He compelled men to crucify Him would be as untrue as to say that God compels any man to commit sin. But it is true that He compelled men to choose between accepting and rejecting Him. His Passion from first to last was mighty Action. In the beginning of His ministry He spoke as One in whom the moral *law* was vested and preached with an authority which none could miss. Towards the end He walked as One who had the right and power to exercise the whole moral *order* in the lives of men. Now that men had rejected Him in their hearts, He drew forth the divine reaction which consisted in their rejection of Him in fact. The moral initiative of Jesus in the events which culminated in His death is organic to the evangelic narratives and must be taken into account in the interpretation of the Cross.

It should not be forgotten that Jesus did get a true response from faithful and loving hearts. There were those who built all their hopes upon Him and who felt that to lose Him would be to lose

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the light of their lives. There were those who owed Him deliverance from the crushing burdens of disease and sin and who gave Him the passionate gratitude and devotion of their hearts. There were friendless souls who found in Him the Great Companion. Had it not been so, there is no reason to believe that we should have had the Cross. But there is no need to build upon imaginary hypotheses. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God."¹ The ineffable majesty of the lowly Jesus ; the truth which flowed from His eyes and lips ; His incomparable pity for men, even for the lowest and last ; the power which He wielded in response to simple faith in Him—these did not pass unrecognised on earth. Hearts and lives owned Jesus as Lord and from them we have the story which has done more to soften the hearts of men than all other influences in history. The debt we owe them is only second to the debt we owe their Lord.

B. MAN'S HISTORICAL PART IN THE CROSS.

What we have just been saying reminds us that the work of divine redemption did not begin with the historical Jesus. It culminated in Him. God was always working for man's redemption, and the ripest fruits of His work were seen in saints of old time. Jesus entered into the heritage and labours

¹ Jn. i. 12.

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of others who had laboured. In Him we see, at least, the Representative of the whole response which previous ages had yielded to God. Besides, the response which Jesus received from His contemporaries would have been impossible without antecedents in history. In this limited sense man played an honourable part in the Cross. But, even apart from considerations of what Principal Denney called "moral decorum," that is not an aspect of the Cross which strikes anyone as central. The outstanding fact is that the race to which Jesus came rejected Him. It nailed to a tree Him who came to save it. Here is another historical circumstance to which due weight must be given in an interpretation of the Cross. To introduce the idea of predestination here in such a way as to cover, were it only with a veil, the moral responsibility of men for their crime, is to promote unreality and stultify intelligence. If man was ever responsible for anything, he was responsible for the crucifixion of the Son of God. To think of the various actors in the crime as being so many automata, moved by mechanical compulsion, is to evacuate the Cross of all that gives it moral meaning and power. We dare not lose sight of the tragic side of the death of Jesus. His death was the tragedy of history. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

All four Evangelists take pains to bring out the

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representative character of the actors in the great tragedy. First there was Judas, one of the Twelve, whom the Master called "comrade." Surely Jesus strove to save him right on to "that night in which He was betrayed." It is sometimes held that we cannot believe this in view of the statement that Jesus knew beforehand who it was that should betray Him. We need not import into that statement more than that Jesus knew who had it in him to betray Him. We may be sure that He had an anxious concern for Judas and it is impossible to believe that He left anything undone to rescue him from the dread goal to which he was pressing. In any case, there was a time in the discipleship of Judas when he was not condemned to be the betrayer, and no one will doubt that Jesus did His utmost to save him then. One loves to think, however, that hope for Judas lingered in the Master's breast right on to the bitter end, just as we like to think that He kept clinging to the hope of Israel's repentance. It is reasonable to infer that, when He handed the sop to Judas at the farewell feast, He was making the last appeal of love to His friend. No appeal could have been more challenging. It compelled Judas either to repent or to do his worst. He went out into the night and did his worst. He delivered Jesus to the rulers.

In the second place, there were the rulers of the people, Sadducees for the most part, with the Pharisees consenting with them for once. The

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betrayers came from among the friends of Jesus; the rulers were the representatives of the conventional religion. To this had the religion of Israel come. The Sadducees were frankly men of the world. Their occupation of the high positions at Jerusalem was due to their ready acquiescence in foreign rule and their eager imitation of foreign culture. They courted their masters to some purpose. Even religion can be dragged at the heels of the "one sly reason which fills the heart," and those Sadducees had come to believe that there was no such thing as spirit or resurrection, and that pure religion and undefiled consisted in having a good time in this world. It is not surprising that Jesus had almost nothing to say to the Sadducees. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous towards God and the traditions of the fathers. Sullen to their Roman lords, and too shrewd to attempt any futile political resistance, they contented themselves for the present with the policy of trying to keep the soul of Israel unspotted from the world of foreign corruption. Sadducee and Pharisee came together in a common hostility to Jesus. His very existence was equally a challenge to the prosperous worldliness of the one and to the loveless traditionalism of the other. To both forms of the conventional religion He was anathema.

Friendship and religion were represented among the forces which slew Jesus, but they could not have

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achieved their purpose, even in those old days, without the acclamation of the *vox populi*. Such help, as it turned out, was not hard to procure. The cleansing of the Temple during the Passion week is sufficient explanation of the bitterness of the satellites who revolved round the Sadducees and shared their profits. These must have been a large and vociferous section of the populace, and their numbers would be augmented, and their hatred fanned, by zealots from Galilee whose anger against Jesus knew no bounds because He would not lead an insurrection against Rome. The two crowds had no love for one another, but now they could join hands for once. Barabbas was more to be desired than Jesus. He was no unpractical dreamer, and his chief fault was that his insurgent plans had miscarried. If one or other of them was to be released, let it be Barabbas. So there was no *vox populi* for Jesus. Whatever public opinion was vocal, was all against Him.

World-power was represented at the Cross by Pilate, who happened to be Roman procurator at the time, and by the soldiers who carried out his sentence. Pilate had a full share of the Roman sense of justice, but he had also something else which was not specifically Roman—the desire to stand well with the power in whose hands his political fortunes lay. The *Pax Romana* extended its principle to the internal economy of every unit under the Empire,

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and the universal aim of Rome's lieutenants was to avoid trouble in their provinces at any cost which was consonant with the imperial supremacy. Here then was a conflict of motives for Pilate. Was he to do justice to this strange Prisoner, alienate the local power and populace from himself, and imperil his standing with Rome? Or was he to do injustice to this one man, preserve the peace, and keep his place? It was an awkward thing for a man like him to be confronted with such a choice, and he, alone among all who were compelled to make their choice in this decisive event, did his best to get out of it. But the moral order, as personified in Jesus, was inexorable for Pilate also. His trained sense of equity was weighed in the balance against his self-interest, or at least against his patriotism, and probably against both, but was found wanting. "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." If the Roman soldiers who carried out the sentence had been mere tools, the Evangelists would probably have said nothing about them. But they were human beings, of the average sort in their own class, and they did their work as neither tool nor animal could do it. They called up their sense of the dramatic to turn their work into a piece of sport and had an enjoyable time of it in torturing the Son of God to death.

The four Evangelists dwell upon these particulars attending the death of Jesus, and no one seems

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to have suggested that they dwell upon them disproportionately. Even the Fourth Evangelist, who selected his material upon a stricter principle than the other three, fills in the details at this point like the rest. The narratives, however they differ in detail, are one in the simplicity, quality and depth of the impression which they leave upon the mind. This one thing at least is certain about the apostolic testimony to Jesus, that it is unanimous in the stress which it lays upon the events leading up to His death. That stress means, first, that in the conviction of those who had the best means of knowing, the most significant thing in the life of Jesus was its culmination in death, and second, that they regarded His death as something which must be "placarded" among men.¹ It was an event which, far from taking place in a corner, had its setting at the very heart of those currents which make up human history. Whatever else was to be said about it, it was a veritable event, a tragedy which social, religious and political forces combined to produce. All the powers of this world that can conspire for the destruction of a human being conspired against Jesus of Nazareth. This race of ours, to which we all belong, was adequately represented in the forces which brought Him to the Cross. The human heart which is not humbled by that fact is proof against being softened by anything.

¹ Gal. iii. 1.

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C. THE CROSS AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS.

To the mind of Jesus, the Cross was not a mere tragedy. Were we to regard His consciousness as being similar to that of other good men, we might be content to regard Him as a martyr in what He believed to be the cause of truth. When, however, we examine His consciousness and reckon seriously with it, the martyr-idea recedes into the background. A martyr does not try to compel men to speak their decisive word about himself. He may and does challenge them to a decision with regard to his principles and their answer involves him in death. The challenge which Jesus issued to His contemporaries centred pre-eminently around Himself.

It is granted that at the beginning of His ministry He did not press His own claims upon anybody, not even upon those who were most closely associated with Him. His theme at that time was God and the Rule of God. He dealt with religious and moral principles, making it clear all the time that the foundation upon which the true life rested was an attitude of the spirit which was wholly personal—the attitude described as faith in God. There was no direct challenge to men to make up their minds about Himself. The explanation of this personal reticence is surely not to be found in “moral decorum,” unless we stretch out that phrase to mean much more than it usually does. It is to be found

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in the facts of the spiritual situation. It was futile to press His Messiahship so long as men cherished false ideas as to what the Messiah was to be like. It was equally futile to press for the confession that He was the Son of God so long as men had very inadequate ideas of God. The first task of His ministry was to teach men about God, and that not only by ordinary teaching methods, but by the revelation of Himself.

The reticence of Jesus about Himself was essential to the revelation of Himself to men. He had to gain a free verdict upon Himself through the quiet, unobtrusive and often tardy process of spiritual persuasion, and this implied a certain reserve about what the final verdict was to be. A premature urgency with respect to the goal to which He desired to lead men would have spoiled all, for it would have meant such a coercion of the human spirit as would have defeated the end He had in view. It is both true and helpful to say that the first task of Jesus was to open men's eyes so that they might have vision enough to see God in Him. We can recognize His joy at Cæsarea Philippi¹ in finding that He had made real headway in this direction with those who were nearest to Him.

After Cæsarea Philippi, however, we can detect a change which has already been remarked upon in another connection. From that time forward

¹ Matt. xvi. 17.

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His reticence began to give place to a more and more unreserved declaration of Himself. This change was adopted by Him in response to changed conditions. On the one hand, He could now count upon the insight and devotion of His immediate followers, and on the other hand, it was now obvious that the nation as a whole was not going to receive Him. Rulers and people alike were bent upon their own ways and were thus resolute in their blindness towards God. The spiritual means which had succeeded with the few had failed to win the many. We must recognise and estimate at its full value this relative failure in the life-ministry of Jesus. Probably He had hoped to gain Israel, but in any case He had failed to do so. His preaching and teaching and mighty works, where they had not won men, had made their hearts harder than ever. Reticence was no longer necessary towards the responsive few and still less so towards the hardened many. For the future, His only reserve would be that of defiance and sorrow.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple may be regarded as characteristic fruits of this change from reserve to affirmation. His teaching and bearing now took the form of a challenge to all men to accept or reject Him. It should not mislead to say that while at first He put God in the foreground of the picture and Himself in the background, now He reversed

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the order. Unmistakably He set Himself in the centre. It is hardly necessary to point out that in the figure just used the reference is to emphasis and not to importance. From confronting men with God, He passed on to confront them with Himself, and in both cases He was doing the same thing though in different ways. No martyr ever behaved like that. The consciousness of Jesus as He passed to the Cross had, as its chief constituent, something which is entirely absent from what we call the martyr-consciousness.

The unique elements in the consciousness of Jesus as He accomplished His baptism of blood may be summarized in the statement that He knew Himself to be One in whom the redemptive power of God on behalf of men was personalized. The implications of this statement must be reserved for later treatment. Meanwhile it is sufficient to underline the postulate of faith that the mind of Jesus as He bore His Cross was an exact reflection of the mind of God. Reference has already¹ been made to the facility with which the notion is entertained that Jesus, in His Passion, took a more lenient view of sin than God takes. It is fatally easy to lose sight of the positive elements, and especially of the sterner of them, which marked His consciousness as He suffered. The mistake is due to thinking of His suffering as mere suffering. While

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 96.

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He yielded His body to the fury of men, His spirit reacted with the very reaction of God against what they were doing. We are saved from misunderstanding here by bearing resolutely in mind that the wrath of Jesus was as real as the wrath of God. The divine condemnation of sin which took place *in* Jesus cannot be understood apart from its condemnation which was effected *by* Jesus. The mind and work of Jesus hold for us the key to the mind and work of God.

The recognition of the attitude of Jesus to sin gives meaning to the affirmation of faith that His love was the very love of God. It is best to interpret His mind in His Passion by its complete harmony with the Will of God. That, so far from withdrawing emphasis from the love of Jesus for men, brings it out into relief by giving it its proper setting. His acquiescence in the Will of God was no grudging thing. It was costly, but it was free. It was the Son's perfect obedience to His Father. Obedience, it is true, suggests the idea of duty, which we tend to set over against the idea of love. But when we say that the love which Jesus had for men belongs to His harmony with the Will of God, we do not imply that He loved men out of a severe sense of His duty to His Father. His love was as spontaneous as the song of the bird, but this does not mean that it was derived from any other source than the one and only fountain of love. He knew that in His

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love for men He was altogether one with His Father. On the other hand, the tasks set for Him by that love were not always such as stir the heart to songs of joy. It was His meat and His drink to do the Will of God, but one cup at least which His Father gave Him to drink was very bitter.

We get a real glimpse into the mood of Jesus as He entered His agony, when we place together His cry in Gethsemane and His thanksgiving at the institution of His Supper. In the midst of an anguish which was deeper than we can understand, He could not only utter His "nevertheless" but even give thanks over the bread and the cup which He was in the act of turning into symbols of His own broken body and shed blood. Harmony with the Will of God is not inconsistent with the task of acquiescing, freely but it may be painfully, in that which the Will of God ordains. The life of Jesus had to be wrought out in the straitened ways of finitude and He could not be the Redeemer of men without much pain and sorrow. His Cross was the culmination of His obedience to the Father and *therefore* it was the culmination of His task of love towards men. Here also, as in thinking of the mind of Jesus with regard to sin, there is risk of misunderstanding. His love to men was not more intense or more gentle than the love of God. It was its perfect reflection. The mistakes which have so often been made at this vital point are best

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guarded against by a sustained conviction as to the centrality of the harmony which always existed between Jesus and the Will of God and which was perfected on the Cross.

This can be summed up in the affirmation that Jesus was conscious of being entrusted with a unique vocation on behalf of men. Such a consciousness presupposes that of a unique relation to God. Questions of the time and order of emergence of these phases in the consciousness of Jesus need not detain us here. The fact that He actually possessed such a consciousness is all that concerns us for our present purpose, and that fact is taken for granted. The unsophisticated reader of the New Testament has no difficulty in discovering it ; indeed, he cannot think of the New Testament apart from it. If one takes up the position that a later age, imagining that Jesus must have had a consciousness of that kind, imported the product of its imagination into the story of Jesus as told in the Synoptic Gospels, there is nothing to do about such a position except to deprecate and deny it. The Gospels speak for themselves and shine in their own light. Paul was a very great man, but the idea that the influence of his individual thought was strong enough to transform the original tradition about Jesus into the consummate picture which we have, say, in Mark's Gospel is so fantastic that if there is any mystery in the matter it is transferred to

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the mind of the person who can seriously entertain that idea. Of course, if the idea were tenable, the New Testament as a document purporting to testify to the historical Jesus would fall to the ground. But, as we have already said, we see no valid reason to doubt the authenticity of the evangelic records and we see the best possible reason for accepting their trustworthiness.

Taking for granted, then, that Jesus knew Himself to be called of God to do something for men which they could not do for themselves, we must try to see what effect the idea of such a consciousness has upon the disposition of our mental furniture. Can we reasonably give a place in the scheme of things to this consciousness which Jesus possessed? The idea that God has revealed Himself through the medium of towering personalities is one which men do not find any difficulty in accepting. It is a commonplace of history. It is also universally admitted that there is an irreducible element in genius. We do not place Jesus among the geniuses of history any more than we place Him among the martyrs. He was far more than a genius and far more than a martyr. All the same, we possess in the consciousness of genius a more useful key to interpret the personality of Jesus than we have in the consciousness of the ordinary man. Is the inexplicable element in Jesus a mere stumbling-block to reason? It is by no

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means a negligible consideration that what proves to be a stumbling-block to some is the light of life to others. That many stumble at the claim made for Jesus by Christian faith is a proof, not that the claim is exaggerated, but that it is stupendous. And stupendous it certainly is. To try to reduce it to terms with which we are otherwise familiar is simply to deny it. Nothing can be more futile than the attempt to rationalize Jesus, but on the other hand it would be a counsel of despair to hold that He puts reason to shame.

It is not unreasonable to believe that God has an increasing purpose for men, that this purpose includes their redemption from evil, and that He has raised up One in human history to be the supreme vehicle of His purpose. No human being, however gifted he may be, is entitled to assert on the threshold that the thing is impossible. The only reasonable course for anyone to follow is to look steadily at the One who felt Himself to be the supreme vehicle of the divine purpose. He may not feel any challenge to himself as he looks, and in that case he will resemble the mass of men among whom Jesus moved when He was upon the earth. But he is challenged all the same, as those men were. He is at least challenged to make up his mind about his relation to God, and if he feels no call to do that, he puts himself among those to whom Jesus had nothing to say. Jesus challenges

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all men to a decision about God and themselves, and whenever they answer worthily, they are compelled to say what they are going to do with Jesus Himself.

The idea of evolution has gripped the modern mind in such a way as to create a prejudice against the idea of any special work of God at one period of history. There are many by whom the whole claim of faith with regard to Jesus is dismissed on the ground that it would imply an undue interference with the ordinary course of things. But what is the ordinary course of things? Is anyone quite sure about what it is? No one knows anything about history until it is made. When oats are sown in a prepared field, there is a reasonable prospect of a crop of oats, but he is a rash man who undertakes to write next year's history. In dealing with history at least, it is foolish to dogmatize upon what the ordinary course of things must be.

The way of science is to let facts speak for themselves. Generalizations and hypotheses are essential to progress, but it is wholesome to remember, not only that there is as yet no scientific hypothesis which covers all the facts of the universe, but also that the deepest currents of scientific thought are now running strongly in the same direction as those of philosophy. No one who is conversant with the profound aspects of modern scientific thought can possibly deny the reasonableness

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of a spiritual explanation of the universe. That being so, one can speak of the personal Will of God as the great controlling fact, without having the feeling in the back of his mind that all educated people are smiling at him. And when, in addition to this, we remember those who, in every age since Jesus lived on earth, have found in Him the key to their thought of God and the means of their salvation, our conviction is deepened that His consciousness, so far from being unreasonable, must be given its due place in any reasonable integration of history.

We are thus led to the following positions as our intellectual and historical presuppositions in construing the work which Jesus did for men on the Cross: (1) God is the ultimate reality of all things. (2) The mind can never find rest until it is in the right attitude to the ultimate reality. (3) The finite conditions under which we live compel us to postulate for ourselves a reality which is relative and progressive. While God is both first and last in the order of fact, He is not first in the order of our knowledge. Our relation to Him and His relation to us are the realities which are our immediate concern, and it is only a true reckoning with these realities that can put us into a true attitude to the ultimate reality. (4) Jesus occupies a unique position in history, in that He, by what He was and did, lifted up to a new and higher plane

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that reality which is the secret of human life—the relation between God and man. These positions form the framework in which our doctrine of the Work of Christ is set, and they leave room for the objectivity of that work without suggesting any change in the nature of God.

The fourth position in the preceding paragraph carries us into the regions of history and faith, but its implications for thought must not be overlooked. What we have called relative reality is nothing else than the Will of God as it is progressively naturalized in history. Nothing is outside of relation to the Will of God, but that Will is done on earth in proportion to the harmony of the human will with it. The place given to man in the historical achievement of the divine Will must be taken as seriously as Jesus took it, and it needs no laboured argument to show that the human will is by its nature disordered. A human will which is harmonious with the Will of God would imply both an adequate knowledge of what God's Will requires at every step of life, and adequate power to carry out those requirements. Apart from Jesus, we know of no such will in history. But in Him we do know it. We see it in His own consciousness, and His life with all its fruits provides the requisite attestation. There is nothing to challenge the validity of His consciousness except the abstract and academic idea that such a consciousness is

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impossible. We can safely set that idea aside. That God should take the appropriate means to further the achievements of His Will on earth at a point in history when it was manifest to Him that progress along the old lines was at an end, is not only a sound hypothesis ; it is the only sound hypothesis, unless we are bent on maintaining either that God has no redeeming purpose for men, or that He lacks the resources for furthering His purpose. There is nothing which is intellectually imposing about either of those alternatives. That one will should appear in history through which the Will of God could make a new departure towards the fulfilment of its purpose is as credible as it is welcome. Surely it was becoming in God to give us Jesus. Jeremiah was bold enough, in his Oracle¹ of the New Covenant, to speak in this strain six centuries before Jesus came, and we, who can now behold² Jesus, may say it with no less conviction and with deeper meaning.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31.

² Heb. ii. 9.

CHAPTER VII

The Interpretation of the Cross

THERE are those who hold that the Cross of Jesus, being pre-eminently a matter for faith and life, ought not to be subjected to the scrutiny of reason. It is maintained that theologians have only darkened counsel by their attempts at intellectual interpretation and that it is best to let the fact itself make its full impression upon the soul and to avoid all theories and doctrines of it. This attitude to the central fact of our religion is intelligible and plausible, but it is none the less to be emphatically repudiated. It repudiates itself, for the simple reason that a fact without some interpretation has no value at all. A fact must have some meaning if it is to make an impression upon the soul, and what that meaning is for a person depends upon what his mind makes of it. If it is contended that it is sufficient to rest in the simple, scriptural interpretation given in the statement "Christ died for us," the reply is that this statement raises questions to which the mind is in duty bound to attempt an answer. If it is fatal, as may be freely admitted, to reduce the Cross of Jesus to an intellectual problem, it is also fatal to evacuate it of its intellectual interest. History and reason both

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testify that it refuses to yield its power in proportion as the Church's mind ceases to be in earnest about its meaning. Even if every doctrinal construction of it has been a failure—a supposition which is a misleading half-truth—it is yet incumbent upon the Church to attempt the construction again. Even if we are persuaded that no final interpretation is within the powers of the finite mind, it is still our task to find the best interpretation of which we are capable.

While there can be no true understanding of the Cross apart from faith, penitence and the pure heart, it should not be seriously maintained that mental processes are to be inhibited because of the sacred mystery of the theme. Ethical and personal categories must of course predominate here, but to insist upon the elimination of physical and biological and metaphysical categories is to rend the seamless robe of truth and to confess intellectual impotence at the very point which makes the largest demand upon the understanding. The denial of the mind, far from being implied in the denial of self, may easily pass into what is virtually a denial of the Holy Spirit. It is often a cloak for mental indolence and fear of the truth, and both of these are inveterate foes of faith. We have the promise of the Spirit to lead us into all the truth as truth is in Jesus, and it is nothing but a subtle form of unbelief to hold that the door of truth is shut at any point

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and to put an embargo upon the understanding there. Here at least, we should do well to copy the mood of Paul and be assured that Christ has made His grace "to overflow toward us in all wisdom and prudence."¹

The core of the Gospel can be apprehended by people of simple understanding, but this is no argument against the obligation laid on those of vigorous understanding to exercise all their mental powers upon it. From time to time in the history of the Church, with periods of transition in between, the thinkers have discovered a formula which enshrined the essential truth of the Cross without doing violence to the thought-forms of their own age. If our thought-forms are farther developed to-day, the truth as it is in Jesus ought to find all the more adequate expression through them. Instead of this, the modern mind oscillates between a refusal to subject the Christian facts and experience to intellectual construction, and an attenuation of them in the interest of a construction which is premature. No doubt we are once again in a period of transition, when the old interpretations no longer satisfy and no new interpretation has been found to fill the void. The prevalence of the idea that now, at last, no intellectual synthesis of the New Testament faith is possible suggests a deplorable fall from that faith. For that faith was marked by courage in the region

¹ Eph. i. 8.

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of the mind as well as in every other region. It is the plain duty of the Church to believe that an appropriate intellectual formula is at hand and to search for it with all diligence.

This is the King's business and it requires haste. Men who are on the side of the angels and have tasted of modern culture are more than likely to have a stop in their minds with regard to the New Testament doctrine of redemption through Christ. The result is that many a good man who feels the centrality of the Cross deep down in his soul is unable to declare that centrality with the passion which belongs to it indefeasibly. With a stop in the mind, the soul cannot deliver itself in a way which brings conviction to others. The most effective preachers of the Cross that are known to the present writer are men and women who have not been touched by modern culture at all, but one still cherishes the conviction that what cultured preachers require is not less culture but more. What Francis Bacon said about the danger of "a little natural philosophy" applies to our age with redoubled force. The Church has need of a deeper spiritual experience, but she has also need of a clearer mind; and it may well be that, if she is true, God will give her both of them together.

A. THE OLD ORDER AND THE NEW.

The New Testament Gospel has its core in the

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twofold affirmation that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead. We interpret that to mean that Christ has become a new centre of life for men in virtue of His having borne the final divine reaction against sin. We have already¹ said that in Jesus the redemptive power of God was consciously personalized, and we must now try to unfold the meaning and implications of that statement. It is made explicit by all the four Evangelists that the unbroken harmony which existed between the Will of Jesus and the Will of God was one which reached the depth and intensity of perfection through increasing discord in the soul of Jesus. We have good authority for holding that Jesus was made "perfect through sufferings."² At the beginning of His ministry, in His baptism and temptation, we cannot fail to recognise the discord in His soul. At that time there was within Him a silent protest against man's plight and against all cheap and artificial ways of dealing with that plight. In His teaching and healing ministry up to the point of departure at Cæsarea Philippi, the protest was vocal and visible. He brought to bear on human lives that redemptive power of God which had always been available, in measure, among men, but which He was able to use with new effect through His unbroken harmony with the Will of God. From Cæsarea Philippi onwards, and supremely on the

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 183.

² Heb. i. 10.

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Cross, His protest became a deeper thing. The old order was now definitely felt by Him to be inadequate. It had served its day, but now it must yield to the new.

The old redemptive order was personalized in the earthly life of Jesus. Both the law and the power to obey it were incarnate in Him. He was able to fulfil the law because He was Himself the perfect manifestation of all that it meant. Besides, while living under the limitations imposed on Him by a human career, He was yet Lord of nature, stronger than the evil forces which war against the life of man, able to evoke penitence, forgive sins and make life new. He taught men how to think of God and of themselves and what the Rule of God on earth implied. Not in spite of, but by means of His reserve about Himself, He was revealing Himself to men with a view to revealing God to them. It is true to the evangelic narratives to hold that He first revealed God with a view to a revelation of Himself and that then He revealed Himself with a view to the fuller revelation of God. Peter's confession at Cæsarea Philippi illustrates this among other things, for it meant that the eyes of the Twelve were so far opened to God that they were able to recognise Jesus in a real though partial way. But in order that the process which was bringing them their vision of God might go on, Jesus had to reveal Himself more fully to them, and this He was to do supremely by means of the Cross.

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Up to the point of departure Jesus had been directly challenging men to a decision about God. Indirectly, of course, He had been challenging them to a decision about Himself, but it is not too much to find in the Gospels an express intention on the part of Jesus to continue, in the first instance, the redemptive work of God as it has been proceeding in Israel. We are made to feel, in the earlier part of His ministry, not only that He is to inaugurate a new movement in the history of redemption, but that He has first of all to complete the old movement. The completion of the old was essential to the inauguration of the new. At the point of departure it had become manifest to Him that the time was now ripe for proceeding to bring in the new order. His challenge to men in the name of God had issued in His rejection by the many and His acceptance by the few. The nation as a whole was tied to its idols, but there were those who were prepared to cast their idols away. His revelation of Himself had for some the effect of life unto life, and for others the effect of death unto death. The time had come to move forward to the new stage.

It is necessary to see that Jesus was conscious of the fact that the old order, as consummated in Himself, had issued in this. The surprise of it was softened for Him by the gradualness with which the conviction of it was borne in upon Him. The sorrow which it brought Him, however, only grew

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the greater as events revealed the situation. Was it defeat? Not altogether, for there were those who believed on Him. But was it to mean defeat for Him in the case of all the rest? Had the resources of God's redemptive power been explored to the uttermost? It was because His answer was an emphatic *No* that He passed to the Cross. He felt it to be the Will of God that a new order of redemption should be built upon the old, an order in which the resources of God should become available for men in a new way. As soon as He saw that the old order was reaching its climax through Himself, He began to fix His gaze upon the Cross. In Him the old order had culminated and in Him the new order must begin.

There is a recurring question as to how events which happened at one single spot of time and place can have universal significance. What have we to do with Judas and Pilate and the Pharisees and Sadducees and all the rest of them? Our age cannot be held responsible for the blindness and misdeeds of a former age. No, but we are responsible for our own blindness and misdeeds. It is pertinent to recall that it was common sins, exactly like those of our own day and any day, that brought about the blindness which rejected Jesus. They who were immediately responsible for the death of Jesus did not know what they were doing. Their eyes were blinded by sin. Pilate put the interests of Rome

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and probably his own personal interests before the demand of conscience to let Jesus go free. That is a very ordinary kind of sin. The Sadducees were so bound up in worldliness and so bent on clinging to their comfortable positions that Jesus seemed to them to be a mere disturber of the peace. That also is a very ordinary kind of sin. The Pharisees and the populace, in different ways, preferred their own religious and political aims to the Kingdom of God as expounded by Jesus. We seem to recognise this sin also among the people of to-day. The sins which set up the situation which produced the Cross are the very sins of this hour.

It detracts in no way from the universality of the Cross that the actual sin of crucifying Jesus occurred only once, and in what the great powers would call an obscure corner of the Roman Empire. The career of blindness which culminated there may be traced from its maximum at the Cross itself away back to its minimum when men, listening to the voice of Jesus as it rang fresh in their ears, and feeling the truth and power of His message, yet turned to their old ways again. It is the first step that is most decisive, and once a man has committed himself to it, the descent to the depths is fatally easy. The point of real tragedy for the soul is that at which it begins to disregard the still small voice. When a man trifles with conscience he steps out upon the way which leads to the rejection of Jesus.

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While we characterise the crucifixion of Jesus as the foulest deed in history, we must guard against the idea that those who shared its guilt had necessarily committed the unpardonable sin. Some of them may probably have done so. But the unpardonable sin is not the speaking of a word or the doing of a deed against the Son of Man. It is the sin against the Holy Ghost, the sin which turns all our light into darkness and robs us finally of our point of contact for redemption. The prayer of Jesus for those who were using Him despitefully involved the assumption that they had not yet had full opportunity to know the truth. The challenge of His life among them had been very real and urgent, but it was not the whole challenge of God. He had not yet exhausted the resources of redemption. Had He done so, the sin of crucifying Him might well have been unpardonable. In this way we have confirmation of the conviction that in passing to the Cross He was going, consciously and freely, to issue God's full challenge to men. He was going to do that which would bring all the holy love of God to bear upon men. Through Him God was to supply what was lacking in the relation between Himself and the race of men.

What has now been said leads up to the position that a new redemptive order was personalized in Jesus through what He achieved for men upon the Cross. It may be taken for granted that personality

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is the highest category that we know, that we know it only imperfectly under human limitations, and that if we knew it perfectly we should probably understand all things. It is the highest task of the mind to explore personality ; and the high-water mark of our knowledge there, must always be our best standard for the interpretation of our universe. It is manifest that if there was to be evolution in the pre-eminently personal region of redemption, that evolution must have its growing-point in a person. Where else could the growing-point be ? Jesus was able to be the originator of a new redemptive order because in Him the old redemptive order was fulfilled and personalized. By the Cross He fulfilled the old and inaugurated the new. He built the new upon the old as a foundation. Of course it was by the grace of God that what Jesus did upon the Cross was made effective for man's salvation ; but while that fact must be strenuously held, it can neither be necessary nor right to stop there. The Christian thought of God compels us to the conviction that His Will belongs to the true nature of things. It is the true nature of things, and therefore we feel bound to seek such an explanation of the achievement of Jesus through His Cross as will at least set the mind in a right attitude to that achievement.

Regarded as an event in the old order of redemption, the Cross was open to the imputation

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of marking the failure of God with men. The divine redemptive energy seemed to be absolutely held up. At the very point where it was in highest exercise it failed to conquer blindness and evoke repentance. Even to the disciples it seemed to mean nothing but defeat. All the moral indignation and all the sorrow of love which must be present in the heart of God towards sin were pent up in the heart of Jesus. They seemed to be achieving nothing. This is involved in the historical fact that Jesus neither retorted upon His enemies with force, nor succeeded in prompting them to clemency or even to common justice. The redemptive power which He carried within Himself was ineffective in the production of penitence in those obdurate hearts, and His power to meet force by force was voluntarily inhibited. In the historical situation of the Cross, He had come to a point at which the old régime was ready to pass away, for it was here faced by a stone wall of resistance without, and within by the divine necessity of enduring.

Regarded on the other hand as an event in the new order of redemption, the Cross can only have its meaning in the Person of Jesus Himself. There the discord in His soul was at its height, and there it melted, through His death and resurrection, into full and joyous harmony with the Will of God. It is a condition of every form of life in this developing system to which we belong that it puts forth

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continuous efforts to complete itself, and personality is not exempt from this condition. Even the Personality of Jesus was not exempt from it. The harmony of His Will with the Will of God, though never broken, had to be deepened, and deepened through struggle and pain. The struggle and pain were wholly on our account, but that, while making them unique in character, cannot be thought of as lessening their reality and poignancy. The effort of Jesus to complete His Personality was all on our behalf and it was consummated in death.

Jesus, by His death and resurrection, became the growing-point of the new order of redemption in virtue of His being the meeting-point in history of the two vital forces of our universe. These two forces are the quest of God for man and the quest of man for God. The latter of these may take strange and sad forms ; it is because this is so that Jesus suffered for us. But the inevitable tendency to complete our personality, even when it appears in its basest form, is always some kind of search for what we deem to be good. Our quest may be a distortion or for nothing better than a mirage, but there it is. Jesus strove to complete His Personality by doing the whole Will of God for us, and He strove triumphantly. On the other hand, by the very nature of His struggle, He was made the centre of God's quest for man. To a Christian man, the mind of Jesus upon the Cross interprets the complete

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Will of God towards a sinful race. The word *complete* is important here in view of the fact, borne out by history and experience, that while a partial knowledge of the Will of God is essential to a recognition of Jesus, it is only the recognition of Jesus that can complete our knowledge of that Will. Except for Jesus, we could not know God as He is. In Him God seeks us. To His consciousness the energy of His Cross was achieving something of incomparable value and power. In Him the divine and the human met as they could never meet elsewhere, and thus He became the new centre of life for men.

B. EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT REACTIONS AGAINST SIN.

We must explore this contact of the divine and the human upon the Cross, if we are to make good the statement made at the beginning of the preceding section,¹ that Christ has become a new centre of life for men in virtue of His having borne the final divine reaction against sin. We have already² referred to the divine reactions, and we must now think of them in their wider relations. In their incidence on men they are restrained, reined-in. Otherwise a man would pay at once the full penalty of his sin and there would be no moral order at all. It is part of that order that sin tends to beget sin, but the inner meaning of this tendency requires to

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 197.

² *Vide supra*. p. 148.

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be well thought out. The moral order is wholly within the redemptive order. Much confusion has arisen through over-abstraction in thinking of the various orders which constitute human life. God acts for man's redemption by means of all that He is. The providential order is rooted in the order of nature ; the moral is rooted in the providential ; the redemptive is rooted in the moral. The idea that one order stops when another begins answers to nothing in reality. The tendency of sin to beget sin belongs to the moral order and is part of the penalty of sin. But it is only part of the penalty. The reactions of sin are in part reserved.

The moral order, alike in its redemptive and condemnatory aspects, fails to reveal the whole character of God in the life of man. It is not a complete revelation. Paul was thinking of this inadequacy of the moral order on its redemptive side when he wrote of "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh"¹ ; he was thinking of its inadequacy on the judicial side when he referred to "the passing over of the sins done aforetime."² The verse in which the latter saying occurs reveals the thought in Paul's mind that God, in His forbearance, had hitherto not dealt out to sin its full deserts. Sin is always visited with its appropriate reactions, and nobody understands that better than Paul did, but that appropriateness

¹ Rom. viii. 3.

² Rom. iii. 25.

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appears in God's forbearance in view of His redemptive purpose. In an era of grace the moral order among sinful men cannot give full expression either to the divine condemnation of sin or to the divine power in delivering from sin. We have represented this situation by speaking of God as reining-in His reaction against sin, but no suspicion of artificiality or impersonality must be allowed to clog the idea. The vital thing to bear in mind is that the reining-in is an act of God Himself in His relation to men, and that the pain and sorrow of it are not experienced as such, apart from Jesus, in the life of man. Man bears divine reaction against his sin, but he is incapacitated by his sin from bearing the painful restraint upon that reaction which is borne by the Will of God alone.

We return to the parable of the Lost Son which is so often used for the purpose of bringing to naught the argument which we are now endeavouring to set up. There we find the perfect expression of the idea of God's forbearance in the interests of redemption. The father in the parable let his wayward boy go. To have coerced the rebellious will might have been a short-cut to good order and discipline, but it could never have won the roving heart. Moral short-cuts, so-called, are not moral at all. The only way to save the boy was by winning him, and he was not to be won until he was farther lost. So the father let him go. But what

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pain was in the old man's heart! The joy which it is the intention of the parable to illustrate is set on a background of sorrow. A dark cloud rests over the earlier part of the story, and it is our sympathy with the father that gives us eyes to see it. The tension in his heart is revealed in every word of the tale. No one could have spoken that parable who did not know what the strain upon the heart of God is like. The nearest to an explicit reference to the father's sorrow is where we are told that "when he was yet a long way off, his father saw him." The old man's eye was always down the road, looking, waiting, pining for his boy's home-coming. We may be sure that God does more than that for wanderers from Himself, but He does that at least. In this incomparable story we have the two elements which need to be emphasised at this point of our argument—the reactions which fell on the boy in his journey to the swine-troughs, and the strain which the father had to bear alone.

It is not easy, if indeed it is possible, to imagine what sorrow can be like in the heart of God. Some people think it necessary, if the religion of the Cross is to be sustained, to direct their worship to a heart-broken God. No form of sentimentalism could be more foolish than that. The thought of God with which the Bible supplies us is the only one that is to be entertained. He dwells in perfect light. The source of all true joy, He is Himself

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“the joyous God.”¹ If joy does not prevail over sorrow in God, what hope is there that it will ever prevail anywhere? Faith in a God who dwells in eternal blessedness is essential to the religion of Jesus Christ. We can hold this faith, and we must hold it, while yet we give full weight to God’s sorrow over men’s sins. The difficulty of doing this might amount to an impossibility were we not aware how strangely joy and sorrow can commingle even in the human heart. The good man is he who has passed through the discipline of sorrow to a joy which is rich and profound. The sorrow may remain or it may be renewed amid “this dance of plastic circumstance,” but it does not submerge the joy. Rather, it is submerged in the joy. It is hallowed and transfigured. One may not know what those mean who talk of “joy which is three parts pain,” but one can know the joy which takes up pain into itself and triumphs over it. Paul could speak of himself and his fellow-apostles as “sorrowing yet alway rejoicing,” and while all analogies are poor when we are trying to think of God, this one can at least help us to a faith in One who is eternal joy.

It is possible also to give way to a foolish sentimentalism in thinking of the quality of God’s sorrow. There is no use in trying to get rid of anthropomorphism in our thoughts of God, but there is urgent need to guard against the abuses of

¹ 1 Tim. i. 11.

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it. Sorrow among men is generally a passive experience. It varies in quality and degree, but poignancy is added by the sense of powerlessness which often enters into it. Sorrow, like fear, is always at its worst when one has nothing to do except to nurse it. We cannot think of God in these terms. His sorrow is not inactive. It is never divorced from His whole character as it usually is, in part, among men. It never paralyses His redemptive Will nor inhibits the energy of His love. The sorrow of a good man helps us to understand the sorrow of God, but there is no need to linger over this analogy. God's sorrow must hold within it the mightiest of all revulsions from men's sins. It is idle to set the father's sorrow in *The Lost Son* over against Paul's "wrath of God," for Jesus spoke more severely even than Paul about the terrible consequences of unforgiven sin. When a man is deep in sin, the thought of God's sorrow passes lightly over him. The thought of God's anger, pointed by some experience of it, has awakening power. The beginning of hope for the sinner is an experience within the conscience and it is hard to see how that can come without some sense of God's displeasure. Of course it is love and not wrath that redeems, but it is sheer folly to suppose that divine wrath plays no part in the process of redemption. We build upon the conviction that in face of men's sins, love begets sorrow in the heart of God, and that

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this sorrow includes wrath. When man's indignation is true, it has a similar source. "Yes, they are my brothers ; hence this rage and sorrow."

In considering redemption, it is not permissible to think of God's wrath in separation from His love. We are kept right by remembering that His love is always holy. If we think of His energy as being single ; if we see, that is to say, that His holiness and His love must work together because they belong together, we are bound to conclude that the reining-in of His wrath carries with it the reining-in of His love. This does not mean that He loves us the less. His love is eternal and unchangeable, but the outlet for it towards man is restricted. We may well believe that this restriction interprets His pain. No sorrow is sorer among us than that which we feel when we are able to help some beloved and erring one who yet makes it impossible for us to help him. God is straitened in us. In His relation to us there is a strain upon Him. The reactions of our sin upon Him are repugnant to Him. Not to be able to exercise His full redemptive energy upon man is a situation in which we cannot think of God as acquiescing.

This brings us to a point of crucial interest. The divine reaction against sin is one thing in God and another thing in man. In man it is felt chiefly as distress, whose cause is vaguely understood or not understood at all. In God it is felt as slighted

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and thwarted love. The full repercussion of the effect of our sin upon God is not felt by us as an experience, and yet it must mean something which is momentous to our lives. It must be adequately dealt with if we are to be saved. If the energy of divine love is to have free course for men, the energy of divine holiness must have free course along with it. Redeeming power can come to men in its complete magnitude and in no other way.

All this suggests a distinction which will be found useful, provided we do not press it unduly. The divine reaction against sin is partly explicit and partly implicit. By explicit reaction we mean that which is experienced by the sinner in the inexorable working of the moral order. It has already¹ been described in detail, and now it must be pointed out that it is not necessarily felt by the sinner *as* divine reaction. Indeed the progress of sin carries with it a growing blindness to the true character of the reaction. It is endured, but it becomes less and less recognised for what it is. Never did human sin issue in an event so repellent to God as when it brought about the crucifixion of Jesus, but never was sin so blind as it then was. Never did men know less of what they were doing. This type of explicit reaction culminated at the Cross. There men were at their blindest, and they were doing their worst. Where sin abounded, the reaction

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 148.

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against it under the moral order abounded also. But much more did grace abound. For Jesus not only elicited that reaction, but also bore its effects upon Himself. He elicited it by compelling men to the action which perfectly represented their character, and He bore its effects by suffering, in the submission of a perfect love, the pain which crucifixion meant for His body and the sorrow which rejection meant for His soul. It is a monstrosity of thought to suppose that He suffered the actual explicit reaction. That is the very reverse of the fact. They who brought about the crucifixion of Jesus suffered the reaction in the hardening and blinding of their hearts, but Jesus suffered the effect of that reaction by submitting Himself to their blind and cruel act, knowing all the while the awful nature of the reaction. Spiritual vision was at its keenest on His part ; it was at its dullest on theirs. That clash of perfect love and insight with ripened unbelief is something to be gazed upon with attention and humility. It could not but have mighty consequences for the human race. Already we can see that Jesus suffered on the Cross what no sinful creature can suffer on earth.

The implicit reaction is not felt as an experience in the natural or moral order of life. If reaction is reined-in for men in the present order, it must be in part reserved. It will perhaps be objected that reactions must react, but, even if the terms employed

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be not wholly defensible, there is no more difficulty about it than in thinking of rejected love. That there are implicit or reserved divine reactions is sufficiently proved by the existence of the natural and moral orders. So long as men live here below, they are never wholly excluded from the benefits of the natural order. We forget this when we dwell too much on the sombre facts of nature, like decay and death. But it is surely an obvious fact that God, in nature, is good to all men. He "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good." The right heart can sing sincerely about God's tender mercies being over all His works. There is a great, broad foundation of goodness upon which the whole of human life is built.

The moral order is continuous with the natural order. If the sun ceased to rise upon a man from the first moment of his alliance with sin, there would be no moral order at all. Nor could there be one if a man's sin were at once visited with an intolerably painful penalty. Such a penalty would either put an end to the sinner at once or give him a non-moral incentive against a repetition of his folly. Men could never receive power to become children of God that way. The redemptive order is continuous with the moral order, and it is manifest that the moral order, like the natural, presupposes the existence of implicit divine reaction. It is just another way of saying that the intelligent purpose

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which is inherent in the present order of things is a purpose to redeem. The maxim of Professor Orr that "the universe is built on redemption lines" is the only alternative to intellectual nihilism.

When we define implicit reaction as the strain which God alone endures on account of our sin, we must qualify our definition by remembering that this strain, even when it does not rise above the threshold of human consciousness, must affect the whole universe of man. The nature of things is strained by sin, and it is not difficult to see that redemptive action, which deals with that strain, must involve the whole nature of things. Sin could only be dealt with where it works its ravages, and that is on the plane of human life. It is through the time-process that sin has had its opportunity with us, and it is through the time-process that redemption must find its opportunity also. Paul's comparison of Christ with Adam answers to a fundamental condition of redemption. It follows also that, as we might expect, the explicit and implicit reactions against sin are continuous with each other. We cannot draw a hard and fast line between them. It is best to think of the explicit as focussed in the earthly life of man, and of the implicit as focussed in the heart of God.

We are now prepared to consider that phase of divine reaction in which the Christian consciousness instinctively feels itself brought to the centre of

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Christ's redemptive work—the loss of the sense of fellowship with God. That this should be said to be implicit might seem illogical were it not that we regard the implicit as shading off into the explicit. Nevertheless we hold to our distinction, for while the withdrawal of God's countenance is the tragic consequence of sin, large part of the tragedy lies in its not being felt as an experience. Strictly speaking, it is not an experience but something which lies behind, giving birth to much experience that may be painful but is always ominous. It is usually so gradual as to be unobserved. It is often caused and accompanied by absorption in some worthy or unworthy interest, and its tragic character may pass unrecognised. Furthermore, it is never the withdrawal of something which was once completely there, else it would be felt as an intolerable experience. If "heaven lies around us in our infancy," we are intended to serve ourselves heirs to heaven as we grow up, but compliance with the world brings us into a heritage of a very different sort. When Jesus tells us that we must become as little children, He is enforcing the need to go back in order to make the right leap, back from the false inheritance into which we have entered, back to the true starting-point for a spiritual career. The withdrawal of the light of God's countenance is very real, but the man who realises it in sorrow is by no means the man who is most hopelessly in the dark.

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When the withdrawal is complete, we have what the Bible so often means by *death*. When God said to Adam : " in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,"¹ it was not meant that Adam would literally die on that very day. At the first taste of sin he would become a dying man. He would enter upon a career whose natural termination was death. When Paul said : " the wages of sin is death,"² he meant the same thing. The essence of death is the loss of fellowship with God. Sin brings that loss and when the process is finished it means death. We must bear in mind the continuity of the light of God's countenance with the light of nature. All the good that we enjoy is from God and much of the misery of life comes from using His gifts in such a way that they turn to sorrow in our hands. But His gifts are unstinted and ungrudged to men in the land of the living. As long as we live we receive better things than we deserve. Death, in the ordinary sense of the word, is the removal of the props which sustain our natural life. Death becomes the supreme tragedy of life, if we have never in our lifetime entered into that fuller fellowship with God which is over and above the common supports which mean so much to us all.

Now, did Jesus taste death in that tragic sense of the word ? The apostolic answer is clearly in

¹ Gen. ii. 17.

² Rom. vi. 23.

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the affirmative. He accepted the death which men imposed upon Him, and in doing so He accepted more. While all the common supports of life were falling from Him, amid the cowardice and the treachery of friends, amid the malice and fury of those to whom He would fain have been a Friend, amid the rending storm of His rejection by a world He came to save, a still more bitter ingredient was added to His cup. Knowing that He was enfolded by His Father's love, He yet felt Himself left to bear the full weight of His agony alone. Had it been otherwise, His pain would have been lost in rapture, and then no new cosmic fact would have emerged. He would simply have been repeating the experience of God. The new cosmic fact emerged in answer to the new thing which Jesus did. He bore the last divine reaction against sin. It is the law of the time-series that when a man yields himself to the Will of God, that Will is furthered on the earth through him. Jesus not only obeyed this law; He fulfilled it, and by fulfilling, transcended it. All good men further the Will of God on earth, but Jesus brought that Will down to a deeper plane in human life. He did so by accepting the Will of God at the crucial point, where none else could accept it and none else could be offered it. We cannot conceive of God being angry with Jesus on the Cross, but we must believe that He left Jesus to taste death in all its grim reality.

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C. THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED.

Jesus completed His Personality as Redeemer of men by bearing the final divine reaction against sin, for this was the only way in which He could complete it in a world which needed to be redeemed. There is no call to enquire how He might have completed it in a world developing sinlessly or whether there would have been any Incarnation in such a world. Such hypothetical questions lead nowhere, and the questions which are started by the only world that we know have sufficient complication for us. Mr. J. A. Hadfield has recently pointed out that "every neurosis is an attempt of the personality to complete itself," although he is far from suggesting that the attempt is confined to neurotic conditions. It may well be, however, that no member of our sinful race is entirely free from neurosis of some sort and that the only difference is one of degree. If every personality tends inevitably to complete itself, there must be some suppressed complex in every personality which has made a false move unwittingly. In that case the Personality of Jesus must have been the only one in history to be entirely free from the neurotic condition, a conclusion which is amply confirmed by the incomparable balance and fulness of His character. And yet His ministry bears testimony to the deepening discord of His soul, a discord even unto death. He was

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completing His Personality as our Redeemer. He was bearing our sins.

It is not beyond our power to comprehend that there was something about sin which was not being disposed of, but which required to be disposed of, on the plane of human history. We have already called it implicit reaction against sin, but it does not matter about the name. Potential reaction would be a suitable name, if we understood it in the right sense. God had a creative work to do in regard to sin and on behalf of man, and it is wholly credible that He could do it only by one like Jesus, whose harmony with the Will of God was unbroken. Jesus, by His Cross, translated the love and sorrow and recoil of God's heart into the language of men and wrought them into the life of men. Why it was necessary that this should be done requires further consideration. The history of revelation bears out the conviction that when God speaks to us He does so in the language of life. His word is always a work. He speaks and it is done. This method of revelation is justified by the principle that spiritual truth, which in this world is always saving truth, cannot be imparted simply by the telling of it. God speaks to man by working in human souls and in history. In His work in history, regarded in its redemptive aspect, He associates with Himself those to whom He has given insight into His Will and power to render obedience to it.

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It has also to be remembered that the work of God in history cannot fully be accounted for by the activity of human souls, however choice they may be. It is a commonplace of history that it is the unpremeditated factors that count for most. The effect is always greater than the causes which men have consciously set in motion. God is the Great Worker in human affairs. In associating Jesus with Himself in the work of the Cross, God was following His unalterable principle of making history with the co-operation of appointed messengers, with this difference, that here the appointed Messenger, Jesus, was completely conscious of the end which God was seeking through Him. Without affirming that Jesus had a detailed knowledge of the future, we may confidently hold that on the Cross He had a perfect grasp of the divine purpose which was to be served by the Cross. The law of the unpremeditated factor was for once transcended. What Jesus meant to accomplish by His Cross was commensurate with the actual effect. All that God intended by it was in the soul of Jesus. But meanwhile let us fasten on this, that Jesus, in building God's love and sorrow and recoil into the fabric of human history, was doing what was absolutely essential to the perfect revelation of God.

The translation of the reserved divine energy into a time-series in which hostile elements prevailed

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could not but have painful consequences for Him who undertook the task of translation. The point of departure in the ministry of Jesus has its deepest meaning in this, that there He entered into the full realisation of the divine purpose to deal with sin through Him. Till then He had been doing the Will of God in the manner in which He was called to do it, ripening the times, fulfilling the old order of redemption. But now, in answer to the course of events, He was called to an untrodden and still harder track, and He resolutely set His face to the Cross. The whole sorrow of God began to fall upon Him, the pain of resisted love finding no longer any relief in the hope that "His own" would receive Him. They were rejecting Him and that meant rejecting God. Sin was more deeply intrenched in the heart of the human race than even He had once thought. It was the Will of God that a new order of redemption should be born out of the old, and He felt in Himself all the pangs of its birth.

It must once again be emphasised that the Cross was a veritable fact of history, and that every interpretation of it which disregards that fact is bound to be inadequate. In it, indeed, we have the very essence of human history; tendencies culminating and clashing; the way of the world coming out in its true colours; man proposing and God disposing. Man's proposal must have every ounce of its weight given to it in an intellectual

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construction of the Cross. It was the proposal to get rid of Jesus. Of course, we are not to forget the friendly proposal that Jesus should not allow Himself to become the victim of human malice, but we have the highest authority for holding that this proposal also was of Satan. We must cling to the position that the Cross was an historical event through and through, for the historical aspect of it is bound up with its meaning. Those theories of it which would hold quite as well if Jesus had not been put to death by the hands of wicked men do not hold at all. When it is said, for instance, that the redeeming work of Christ consisted wholly in what was in His mind towards man, or God, or both God and man, there must be something radically awanting, for these very things in His mind urged Him to the Cross.

It is not to be credited that Jesus allowed Himself to be "lifted up from the earth" in the sole interest of publicity. That the ends of publicity were served by the Cross is obvious, but that is a very different thing from holding that publicity was the compelling motive either with God or with Jesus. God never does anything *just to let men see*; He does things *which men can see*. We must eliminate the artificial and the arbitrary from all our thoughts about God. When Jesus pressed on to the Cross, it was with the set purpose of enduring the worst that the malice and blindness of men could do to Him. He had to fulfil the moral order by compelling

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men to a decision with regard to Himself, and He had to fulfil the old redemptive order by taking all the immediate consequences of that decision upon Himself. When we are thinking of what Jesus did *for* the sins of men, we dare not lose sight of His own free resolve to suffer *by* the sins of men.

The guilty conduct of men, marked by various degrees of blindness, enters vitally into the interpretation of the Cross. For it was part of the material out of which Jesus wove the love and sorrow and reaction of God into human history. The men who planned and carried out His crucifixion did not see this ; they saw only what seemed to be the successful outcome of their schemes. But *we* can see Him bringing down the redemptive power of God to the plane of human life, amid all the conditions imposed by His freely accepted finitude and by the sin of a blind and obdurate race. It is impossible for us to see how God could have brought His redemptive power into history in any other way. God cannot deny Himself, and men could not crucify Him even if they desired to do so. But they crucified Jesus. They compelled Him, the free Victim, to bear all the pain and shame of the Cross, while at the same time He shared with His Father all the revulsion from men's sins and all the sorrow of thwarted love. Jesus could and did endure something which God Himself could not endure, but which had to be endured if divine redemption was to find a new

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starting-point among men. This original suffering was not borne by Him outside of relation to God. It was in Him that God was "reconciling the world unto Himself," but the cost to Jesus was a new thing in the universe. What the cost was to God can only be measured by the love which He bore to the Son of His love, and no one can measure that.

In the Cross we may see the climax, both of God's sorrow over man's sins and of His joy in His Well-beloved. He was always well pleased in Jesus and never more so than at the Cross. We must bow in awe before the love of God towards Jesus in His agony, but we can see, if only dimly, how perfect sorrow, which in God is included in a deeper joy, had to have a different setting in One whose task had its sphere among human limitations and sins. We have already remarked that if Jesus had been filled with the joy of God upon the Cross, it would not have been the Cross at all. The pain, the shame, the sorrow, the revulsion would all have been sublimed in eternal joy and no new redemptive order would have been brought into being. In the Cross we see the process of sublimation going on, and how painful the process was no man can guess. All we can say is that the agony of Jesus, while being in line with the sufferings of the meek of the earth in all ages, was yet as unique as His character and vocation. No one till now had seen sin out of God's eyes and felt as God feels towards it. No one till

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now had loved men as God loves them and been able to do for them what the Will of God required to be done. The tension produced by sin upon the heart of the Eternal was temporalized upon the Cross. The new order of redemption was inwoven with the life of Jesus through the death which He accomplished for us.

No attempt should be made to explain away the cry of desertion from the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" He had a full sense of being loved, but no sense of being helped, from above. The best of men know something of the solitude of spirit which comes from the seeming silence of God. To Jesus this solitude was an agony. His acceptance of it was necessitated by the fact, so simple and yet so profound, that even He had to have a Will of His own before He could give it up to God. His Will, like the will of every one who passes through this life of ours, was all the time in the making. With Him it was never disordered, but always in process of completing itself. At His baptism He surrendered it for us men and for our salvation, but that surrender had to be endorsed at every step of the way. The Cross was His last and hardest endorsement, for there He yielded up His will along with His life. It had to be done alone and in pain. Through dying as He died, His Will triumphed finally over all temptation and became one with the perfect Will of God

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for our redemption. His Personality was complete and a new redemptive power was set free for us.

It was the conditions created by our sin that made this final surrender an agony. When we think of Jesus in any act of surrender to the Will of God, we dare not think of Him as doing it in the abstract. He always counted the cost, but He could not know the full cost until He was called to pay it. His Cross was His payment of the last and heaviest instalment. The final act of surrender had to be performed on an inconceivably desolating stage. There are people who die without the light of God in their souls, and who yet, so far as we can see, suffer nothing more than mortal pain, if they suffer even that. But to Jesus whose meat and drink it was to walk in fellowship with His Father, the withdrawal of the sunshine of that fellowship must have been an experience beyond comparison. It was a bitter cup that was offered Him by His Father's Will at Calvary, and it was His task to drain it to the last drop. It may have been the sense of His task that made Him decline the offered cup of forgetfulness. He desired to pass through the dark cloud with an unclouded mind.

In this exposition of the Cross we have found the essence of the Work of Christ to consist in His bringing down the full redemptive power of God to the level of human life. That power was concentrated in His own Personality as completed by the death which He accomplished on our behalf

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in obedience to the Will of God. In the earlier order of redemption the Will of God was restrained by human sin and by the divine purpose to redeem men from sin. Through the Work of Christ every barrier has been broken down. The redemptive order is new because it is now personalized in One who had His indefeasible place in human history and who, in virtue of His work in history, has received from God His rightful place in the eternal order. Christ reigns from the Tree.

It is not a figurative expression of this exposition, but only a more general statement of the actual fact, to say that this translation of a new order into history was accomplished by Jesus through His victory over the whole power of evil which ravages the life of man. We cannot interpret the Cross apart from the conflict which was waged in the soul of Jesus there. It was not a conflict with men; still less was it a conflict with God. It was a conflict with the power of evil which haunts human life and which we have not hesitated to regard as intelligent, personal, subtle and far more powerful than man. The bearing of sin's reactions was at the same time the great victory over God's enemy and man's. The final surrender of Jesus to the Will of God, or the completion of His Personality, was also His final triumph over the foe whose supreme concern it was to defeat Him. In this exposition we have tried to fill in the lines of the great triumph, by showing that it is not something which is remote

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from these lives of ours, but something which is intensely ethical, personal, practical. It was a triumph on our behalf. Christ died for our sins.

Every man's actions are the fruits of his character, but his actions, in turn, bear fruit in his character. If action is fruit, it holds the seeds of more fruit. There is a fateful element in human choice. When Jesus chose the Cross, He thereby chose consciously to be the Saviour of men. That was His mission upon the earth. For that purpose He came, and His coming was not complete until He breathed His spirit out with the words "It is finished." The incarnation in Him was an incarnation unto death. What Jesus did upon the Cross was the ripest fruit of His character, and we cannot conceive of the fruits which spring from it being aught else than worthy of that which gives them birth. By His death He finally qualified Himself to be our Saviour. It is now recognised that personality has its essence in its power to communicate itself to other personalities. The perfect person possesses perfect communicableness of spirit. God is the perfect Personality. Edward Caird says, in discussing Agnosticism, that we know more of God than we do of any other person or thing, because there is more in Him to know. We may add the further reason that He has the revealing power raised to its highest terms. It may seem a difficulty that He does not reveal Himself, perfectly and immediately, to every man, but the difficulty

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disappears when we take into account the nature of sinful personality. God is proved to be the perfect Personality by His gift to us of Jesus. The completion of the Personality of Jesus through His Cross is the means by which we draw nigh to God and He draws nigh to us.

Finally, the Cross could not ignore the spiritual nature of man. It could not be a mechanical transaction, but had, on the contrary, to have the force of God's mightiest appeal to men. It had to be something to wake men out of spiritual sleep and evoke from them penitence, gratitude and a surrender of the will resembling the surrender of the Will of Jesus on the Cross. The action of holy love can never be anything else than spiritual, and the Cross is the perfect action of holy love in a world of sin. The redemptive order, in virtue of the triumph of Jesus, became in Him a new thing. It could get down to the roots of human nature as it could not do before. But communicableness on the part of the Giver requires receptiveness on the part of the receiver, and the essence of human receptiveness is faith. The Cross had therefore to be something which could pre-eminently evoke faith. However feebly it may be recognised and however widely it may be ignored, faith in Jesus, crucified and risen, is the universal human task. Through this faith alone can a man complete his personality and find salvation, for it is the living link which binds him to his Saviour.

CHAPTER VIII

The Way of Salvation.

A MAN is being saved when his personality is on the way to true completion. Someone will at once interpose with the reminder that the ideal personality is not a fixed quantity, that it is both foolish and futile to try to put all human beings into one mould, and that the way to the true completion of any personality depends upon what is the goal of that personality. All this may be conceded without demur, but it is to be remembered at the same time that truth is truth and that variety becomes vacuity as soon as it transgresses the limits of truth. Professor John Nichol once said that the most original people were to be found in lunatic asylums. Variety in personality, like variety in nature, must take place within the great common mansion of truth. We are at liberty to proceed upon the conviction that the truth is in Jesus Christ, that He is the Truth and the Life, and that He is therefore the Way to the true completion of personality. It is the glory of Christianity that its ideal is centred in a Person who is abundantly able to satisfy the deep human sense of need and to complete every personality which is united with Him in faith. It

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is inconceivable that any other kind of ideal can suffice for a human being. We all have much *from* which we need to be saved. We belong to a race which has had a very mixed record, as even those who are loudest in praise of man will not deny. It is the easiest thing in the world to slip into moral blindness and degradation, and we can be lost by simply doing nothing. We pass our time here upon an inclined plane down which we most certainly go if we make no effort and find no help. Redemption from this world is a universal need. There is also much *to* which we need to be saved. We are all heirs to greatness, but we have disinherited ourselves, and we shall never enter our heritage if we insist on being either idle or proud. Of course, redemption from this world and redemption to the Kingdom of Heaven are not two processes, but one. They belong to one indivisible experience whose key is Jesus Christ.

A. THE CROSS AND FAITH.

The position of faith in the Christian way of salvation is incomparable. Faith brings us into that way and keeps us in it, and nothing else can do either of these things. Christian faith—and that is the only kind of faith which concerns us here—is pre-eminently faith in a Person, but the Person becomes known to us, in the first instance at least, by what He has done for us. People are attracted

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to Christ by many different routes, and these routes are all legitimate and desirable when they lead to the right attitude to Him. But it is too obvious that many feel the attraction of His character who have never come into the true attitude of soul to Him. He is not content with admiration ; He requires submission. He demands that the personality which is not centred on Him allow itself to be completely broken down in order that it may be rebuilt on the new foundation. He claims all that there is of us, mind and heart and will. No claim can be higher or more imperious than His, but he who lowers it does that which Jesus Himself never once did when He was on earth and which now He most certainly repudiates. It is hard to see how any personality can be subdued by Jesus which has not been subdued by His Cross. The Personality of Jesus was completed through His achievement of the Cross, and the faith which saves is faith in "Christ and Him crucified."

It is the Holy Spirit that generates faith, but this fundamental Christian fact must be guarded from two misconceptions which easily beset it. First, it must not be thought that the Spirit swamps or ignores a man's personality when He generates faith within the soul. On the contrary He works constantly at the springs of personality with a view to renewing it and raising it to the best of which it is capable. The man is not treated as a stock

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or a stone, but as a spiritual being whose highest faculties must be enlisted on the side of Christ. He is never more himself than when he is filled with the Spirit, and he begins to be himself when faith dawns within him. It is not permissible for him to take up the position of waiting idly till the Spirit grants him the gift of faith. The Spirit is not only waiting for him, but also working in him, for the production of faith. His whole spiritual being is involved in the very first movement of faith, and if that movement does not take place, the fault is not with the Spirit who makes no mistakes, but with himself in thwarting the action of the Spirit somewhere. The Spirit generates faith and, because it is He who does it, it is precisely in the region of faith that personality finds its fullest expression.

Second, it must not be imagined that the Spirit originates faith without the appropriate means. He works at the springs of personality, but He does not take the evangelist's work out of his hands. He does not put an intuition of Christ and His Cross into the minds of an unevangelized tribe; He inspires a Christian missionary to go and declare the Gospel to them. What we can do, and what we are meant to do, is not done for us by the Spirit. If we fail to do it, it remains undone, and others as well as ourselves suffer. The Spirit originates faith by means of truth proclaimed by messengers sent by Him. And the truth which He thus uses is truth

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as it is in Jesus. He prepares the soil for the reception of the seed, and when the seed is faithfully sown, even though it be in tears, He sees that the appropriate harvest is reaped. It is required of His messengers that they sow faithfully, and they cannot fulfil this requirement except the heart of their message be the word of the Cross. The Spirit needs that word to be preached in order that He may generate faith within the souls of men, and if for any reason His messengers hold back the word of the Cross, they should seriously consider the terms of their vocation.

The Cross of Christ is the supreme faith-evoking means. A sense of insufficiency and need lies at the basis of all religious life, but the world has many expedients for erecting something else upon that basis. It has its opiates and stimulants in such abundance and variety that there are multitudes who, if they can be said to have formed an opinion on the subject, have reached the conclusion that religion is not required. Never has the world catered so successfully for the souls of men as it does in our day. But the world's catering has only produced a widespread leanness of soul. Not that the soul of our age is complacent; it was never less complacent; it is in a state of high fever. But the fever burns itself out in the quest for material things, not in the quest for God. A good many honest men seem to think that religion has no chance amid

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all this delirium and are in the mood to creep in behind the wall until the storm is overpast. Others think that the Gospel can quite well stand until everybody is suitably housed, and so they throw themselves into the struggle for better conditions all round, upon the principle that if you seek first the kingdom of this world, the Kingdom of Heaven will be added unto you. If that principle works out successfully this time, it will be the first time it has ever done so in the history of the race. But the servant of Christ knows where he stands. The Cross is the power of God to all who have faith, and it is the power of God to evoke faith if anything can do it.

The Cross has all the awakening power that it had when it was first preached. Men who live "just as if Jesus had never lived and as if He had never died" need to be awakened out of their sleep. It is only the Spirit that can rouse them, but He tarries for His messengers to sound forth the awakening note of the Cross. If Christ reigns from the Tree, from that same Tree He sends forth the full challenge of God to the world of men. It is the challenge to us to reckon with God for these sins of ours. Our sins are serious enough for Him to have reckoned with them once for all, and at a cost which no man can compute. Is He to be troubled by them while we make light of them? After all, are men so very hard to be convinced, by a passionate presentation of the Cross of Jesus,

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that God has taken the trouble to deal with their sins ? At all events, we have no right to presume that they cannot be convinced until we have tried worthily to convince them. The trumpet-call of the Cross is too feeble among men to-day and it is not the Cross that is to blame for that. When the reveille is sounded by men who know that it is high time to be done with sleep, it will still awaken the dead as it has always done.

We sometimes complain that we cannot make the headway which we desire because the sense of sin is so feeble in the modern world. The sense of sin has been feeble in every dry age, for it is the way of sin to drug its victims. Perhaps we are like the people of whom Tolstoi wrote, when he likened them to children playing with their watches, removing the mainspring, and complaining that they will no longer keep time. The sense of sin and the sense of God wax together and wane together. But how is the sense of God to be revived ? There are Christian thinkers who, oppressed by the spiritual dulness of the times, maintain that no headway can be expected by means of the Cross of Christ until the sense of God is quickened by some other means. If that were so, we should have to confess that the Cross is not the supreme revelation of God. But we cannot confess that, for we do not believe it. Surely the best way to rouse men to a sense of God is by passing on to

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them His most urgent challenge, and such a challenge is the Cross of Jesus Christ. If it does not stir men to earnestness about the things which matter, nothing else can stir them.

The Cross has still its healing power as well. Once more, it is the Spirit that heals men's souls, but He must have the Cross declared as the power of God to bind up the wounds of men. Every man has been wounded by sin and, though he may be ignorant of what is going on, his wound keeps festering till it is healed by God. When the light of the eternal reveals his plight to him, and he comes to himself, the recognition of the love of the eternal is the most relieving experience that can come to him. To the revelation of his plight is added the revelation of a love which has been concerned with it all the time and is able to deliver him. Since he has really come to the Cross, he cannot miss the love which is in it. The first look awakened him; the second breaks him down. In point of fact, it is the Spirit and not the look that does both, but the Spirit uses the Cross on the one hand, and the man's intelligence and feeling and will on the other, to inspire his soul with faith. The man may not be immediately conscious of the working of the Spirit within him, but he is conscious of the folly and guilt of his own sin, and his wondering eyes behold a love which he had never suspected, because he had been incapable of apprehending it, till now. The old

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man in him breaks down and the new man arises out of the ruins. He is a new creation in Christ Jesus. Faith is born ; he knows that his past is forgiven ; his life has a new centre, a new direction, a new power.

Faith is essentially a religious magnitude, but it is none the less on that account reasonable, ethical, personal. The Cross is all that, and faith, which is the acceptance of the benefits of the Cross, must be all that also. That is why Christ needs to be preached to men. The question is sometimes asked why we should need to know about the Cross. If God has done this great thing for us, through and in His Son, why should we not get the benefit of it automatically, just as men get the benefit from a thousand things in nature of which they are in blissful ignorance ? This amounts to asking why we cannot be saved without faith, and it is not a reasonable question. It is not reasonable to demand that spiritual beings should be saved on terms which are not spiritual. All that makes a man what he is must be engaged in the process of redemption. At the beginning of the process he must give his *Amen* to God's *Yea*, and his *Amen* must continue as long as the process lasts. He must answer the challenge of holy love as a rational and moral being, and in answering it truly, he enters upon the way of salvation. Faith, with all its implicates of intelligence, feeling and will, forms his spiritual

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link with Christ who is his centre of spiritual and redemptive energy. The channel which connects us with our spiritual reservoir must itself be spiritual. That channel is faith, and there can be no other. When faith is born within us we are put in contact with the power which condemned sin upon the Cross and raised Jesus from the dead. The dawn of faith is bound to be the beginning, and the only beginning, of our salvation.

The attempt to set up some rival to faith, or to eke out faith by something else, is to be strongly deprecated. The highroad of faith must be kept clear at all costs, and every rival or appanage is so much lumber stretched across the path of the Spirit. We have already¹ stated that magic has been the most ruinous foe of Christian doctrine, and it is putting the same thing in another way to say that mountains of mischief have been raised by the failure to give faith its proper place in the Christian salvation. When people assert, for example, that Sacraments or works of any kind have a spiritual value apart from faith, they are really claiming that spiritual benefits come to a man apart from the Spirit, and this is both a false and a mischievous idea. If it is retorted that the Spirit works in men who are without faith, the obvious answer is that He works there with a view to the production of faith and that the men in question

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 130.

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are either resisting His overtures or yielding to them. If they are resisting, they are putting themselves further away from the birth of faith. If they are yielding, they are encouraging the true antecedents of faith within them by following the gleam which is given them. One who lacks a full-orbed faith in Christ may be benefited at the Lord's Table, if he has the feeling that there he is in the way of being benefited, and if he conceives the benefits in spiritual fashion. That is a case of dawning faith and it is the work of the Spirit to bring it to the full light of day. The man, on the other hand, who continues to resist the Spirit, leaves the Lord's Table a much more hardened man than when he came to it, for the Gospel is always a savour of death unto death where it is not a savour of life unto life. In the case of both types of men, the peril of promising spiritual good apart from faith is obvious. Faith has as unique a place as the Spirit Himself in the Christian way of salvation.

When it is claimed, whether on behalf of sacramentalism or of mysticism, that there is available for man a still higher good than can come by the way of faith, it will not affect the claimants to say that we know nothing of it, for that will be put down to our want of knowledge. It will affect them just as little to affirm that we cannot find anything of it in the teaching of Jesus or in the pages of the New Testament. But whether it affect them or

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not, we are bound to express the conviction that the idea of a higher way to God than the highway of faith is not true to the facts. It puts God out of focus to us and it puts us out of focus to ourselves. It depreciates faith by comparison, overreaches the Holy Spirit, and consciously or unconsciously dishonours Christ. The only true view of the Sacraments is that which finds in them the matchless gifts which our great Saviour gives to a great faith in Him, and the only true mysticism is that which a man finds when he draws nigh to God along the common highway of faith in that same Saviour. Nothing lower than faith can suffice for salvation, and for men who are being saved there can be no higher way than faith.

B. THE FACT AND THE LAW OF THE CROSS.

The unique place which the Cross of Jesus holds in human history must not be interpreted apart from the supremely intimate articulation of that event within history. At the one point where the human will was given the opportunity of recognising the Will of God in a Person, and where, moreover, if anywhere, it might have been expected to rise to the recognition, it yet at that very point set itself in the most flagrant opposition to that Will. But at that same point in history the Will of God was done on earth as it could never have been done before. It was done by God Himself in and

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through Jesus, but none the less in history. The uniqueness of the Cross consists, not in its being isolated either from the ways of God or from the ways of man, but in its being the culmination of the outgoing of God's eternal redemptive energy for man's salvation. The goal of any process is unique, but that does not suggest that it is detached from the process. Jesus fulfilled the moral law, which, be it remembered, was a great divine means of drawing men into closer relation to God, and in fulfilling that, He found His Cross. Through what He achieved there, He completed in Himself, or God completed in Him, the law of redemption. Such an event could not but have vast consequences for the whole of human history.

There is thus a *law* of the Cross which we dare not dissociate from the *fact* of the Cross. No human being is at liberty to expect that he may enjoy the benefits of redemption while he disregards the *ethos* of redemption. He might as reasonably rejoice in the light of the sun while insisting on living underground. Faith, from the very moment of its birth, brings us into touch with creative and transforming power. The faith which is not working moral miracles in our lives has no relation to the faith which is generated by the Holy Spirit. It is nothing but a mockery. Much mischief has been done by the idea that the Cross is simply a divine scheme for delivering men from the penalty

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of their sins. There can be no doubt that many people have the vague notion that the scheme is artificial, while some are rather pleased than otherwise to think that it is so. There are honest souls among them who suppose that they honour God and pronounce the last word on the subject by asking triumphantly "Cannot God do what He likes?" But there are others of a baser sort, who prefer an artificial scheme on the ground that it does not disturb their lives too violently. The best antidote to all this is to let the word of the Cross go forth as it is. It calls all men to faith, not in a scheme, but in a Person. They who are joined to Christ by a living faith neither see nor desire to see anything artificial in His Cross. He loved us and gave Himself up for us. The giving up of His life was vital for Him, and it is meant to become vital for us through a vital faith in Him. We catch sight of the Cross when the eye of the heart is filled with Jesus as He is, once crucified, now glorified.

In the mind of Paul, the fact and the law of the Cross always went together. He was fond of describing Christian experience as a threefold imitation¹ of Christ in His death, resurrection and ascension. The failure to note that in this description he is illustrating experience has created misunderstandings on the right and on the left. On the one hand, it is said that here we have one of

¹ Rom. vi. 3-11; Col. iii. 1-4.

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Paul's mystical extravagances ; on the other, it is held that here we have a view of the Gospel which displaces the more formal view expounded elsewhere by the same apostle. Surely nothing could be more prosaic than the second of these criticisms. Dying with Christ is a figure which is not to be interpreted literally. But it is to be taken seriously, and when we take it that way, it is entirely consistent with Paul's fundamental teaching with regard to the death of Christ. That he uses the figure so freely may be taken as additional evidence of the secure place which the reconciliation wrought by Christ had in his own mind. He could take for granted, moreover, that his readers would not misunderstand him, but of course he was not thinking particularly of readers in the twentieth century.

As to the criticism that Paul's description of Christian experience is a mystical extravagance, the best answer is an understanding of the description itself. When he says to the Colossians : "Ye died," they knew very well what he meant. He meant that, when they professed their faith in Christ, they made the great surrender to Him. In a very real sense, they died with Him. They gave their wills up to God in the same sense in which He had given His Will up. This imitation of Christ does not rob the death of Christ of its unique significance. The Colossians could obviously be trusted not to press the illustration beyond what

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it was intended to cover. Their self-renunciation bore a close resemblance to that of Jesus on the Cross. They were obeying the law of the Cross, as every follower of Jesus must do. Far from being an extravagance on Paul's part, this is an exact echo of the teaching of Jesus Himself. When Jesus told the Twelve, for the first time, that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer a violent death at the hands of men, they deprecated¹ the idea. As part of the rebuke which He administered to them, He told them that the law which was constraining Him to the Cross was one which had its application to them also. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."² Self-denial is one of the many words which have undergone dilution in modern usage, but as it came from the lips of Jesus it must be given its full strength. It means a complete and permanent renunciation of self, and Paul means precisely the same thing in his metaphor of dying with Christ.

Faith is both the recognition of the immeasurable debt we owe Jesus for the fact of the Cross, and the whole-hearted acceptance of the law of the Cross. It is a thousand pities that Evangelical Christianity has so often laid itself open to the charge of allowing the second of these two aspects of faith to be overshadowed by the first. It is, if possible, even more deplorable that other Christian communions have

¹ Matt. xvi. 22.

² Matt. xvi. 24.

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often allowed the first to be overshadowed by the second. It is partly due to the difficulty which the human mind has in maintaining the balance of truth, and partly to the disastrous consequences of ecclesiastical controversy, that faith has suffered grievously in the house of its friends. Faith must be fully alive both to the fact and to the law of the Cross, if it is to be fully alive to either of them. We cannot be too grateful to Christ for what He has done for us, once for all, upon the Cross, or too trustful towards Him for what He is able to do for us at this hour. It is the fundamental article of our faith that our salvation is from God, and anything which blurs that article, intentionally or unintentionally, is an enemy of our souls. On the other hand, whatever tends to cut the nerve of moral endeavour and turn the Cross of Christ into a sedative for conscience is to be shunned like a plague. It is hard to think of a more foolish and pitiable situation than that of those who have fallen asleep at the Cross. What can wake men who have learned how to sleep through God's loudest challenge ?

It must be admitted on the whole that Protestantism, through encouraging the heresy that liberty is an end in itself, has failed to encourage the culture of the soul. The liberty of the children of God is a precious boon, but it is always the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It is as foolish

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as it is easy to conclude that we may dispense with all self-discipline because we must not be slaves to any particular form of self-discipline. People who protest against the formality of set times for prayer fall readily into the habit of never praying at all. The denying of oneself is a life-long process, and it can never be an easy process for anyone. For men also there is a Way of the Cross, and it is not to be denied that it is a dolorous way. It belongs to the great paradox that the way of salvation is also the joyous way and that Christian saints are meant to be "the merry men of the Lord." But it is only through tribulation that we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and it may well be that the lack of exuberance in modern Christianity is mainly due to the refusal to obey the law of the Cross. This refusal is want of faith. The man who has no intense prayer-life lacks faith in Christ and Him crucified. If he believed that Christ is the source of the life which is life indeed, and that a new life is waiting for him if he will take pains to press on towards it, is it possible that he could refuse to take the means to receive a gift so great? God pursues us with His goodness and mercy, but we simply run away from Him so long as we are not in earnest about His offered gifts. To recognise that He has something great to give us every moment, to wait upon His Will, to seek Him with the whole heart remembering all the time that His search for us is

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more eager than ours can ever be for Him, to discover constantly how greatly we need to be forgiven and how much we yet need to be—that is faith, and as we follow its track we find that, while we can never in this life leave the Cross behind us, we are all the while winning our crown.

C. THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE.

Faith is the means by which the human personality rises to fellowship with God. It is stating the same truth from the other side to say that the Holy Spirit is the means by which God brings men into fellowship with Himself. The supreme concern, alike for faith and for the Spirit, is Christ who died for us and rose again. The human spirit enters into fellowship with the divine at the point where God has made His nearest approach to men, and that is in Jesus, the crucified and risen. In Him God has uttered His *Yea*, and in Him also we must utter our *Amen*. If spirit is to meet with Spirit, it must be there. Now, as soon as we accept the fact of the Cross and begin to follow its law, we are committed to the task of love towards our fellowmen. It is love that redeems, and love, in the very act of conquering us, becomes the conquering principle in our souls. We are constrained to serve those whom Christ has served, and He has served all. We might as well try to live on this earth without breathing as try to live

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in the fellowship of the Spirit without loving all men. The life of faith must be energetic in love.

Both in fact and in thought, the social nature of man is inseparable from his spiritual nature, and the Holy Spirit regards all the conditions of human life. The human race is knit together for weal or woe by ties which are more powerful than anyone knows and which cannot be completely severed while life lasts. The Spirit uses those ties as instruments for the accomplishment of His work among men, and they become His instruments wherever He is not resisted and men respond to His action by allowing their hearts to be opened to faith in Jesus. That the Spirit requires the co-operation of the human evangelist is not a difficulty. One has only to try to imagine what the situation would be like if the Spirit were to dispense with the instrumentality of loving and consecrated minds and hearts and hands. It is inconceivable how any spiritual kingdom could be built on earth that way. There could be no field for faith or love or even for intelligence. The law of the Cross would be stultified and the spiritual foundations of man's universe would disappear. The social tie too often works among men with tragic consequence, but it can be redeemed by love and it is only the power of the Spirit that can thus redeem it. How otherwise can He do it than by prompting men to love one another? The fellowship of the Spirit is the fellowship of love, for the

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love which is its element partakes of the divine quality, crossing every barrier that even hate can raise.

The Church is the society of all those who have faith in Christ. It has been created and it is sustained by the Spirit for the accomplishment of His work of ministering Christ to men. The highest function of the Church is its testimony to the redeeming power of Christ, for there it serves the end for which it has been brought into partnership with the Spirit. It lives in proportion to its testimony and it testifies in proportion to its life. Life and testimony act and react on each other. It is therefore equally true to say that the highest function of the Church is its worship in the name of Christ. For in such worship Christ is present in the power of the Spirit and His gifts are received by believing hearts. Were the Church to cease receiving Christ, it would soon cease to testify of Him, for only a living Church can bear testimony to a living Christ. True worship is the supreme form of testimony, for there Christ is present according to His promise, and it is His presence that gives to testimony its value and power.

There is nothing arbitrary in the promise of Christ to the two or three who are gathered together in His name. The channels of sympathy which connect soul with soul are channels which the Spirit requires for His ministry of love. The

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spiritual enrichment of personality cannot be achieved in isolation, for sociality is of the very essence of individuality and God is love. We are not being filled unto all the fulness of God unless we are growing in love one towards another. There can be no greater obstacle to the action of the Spirit than cherished hatred or contempt or indifference between man and man. These things stop up the channels of the Spirit and until a man is willing to have them swept from his soul he remains cut off from the mighty stream of redemptive power. The Spirit needs the Church for His sphere of action. He means that each member should be a help to all the others and be helped by them. Individuals do not cease to be different from one another when Christ is being formed in them. The completion of a redeemed personality is a process which can only be sustained in the corporate life of the Church. They who find it hard to keep the joy of the Lord in their hearts in the midst of their daily work are meant to come again and again into the company of their fellow-believers and have their souls restored in the common joy. Some are more lonely than others ; there are always some who are in sorrow ; some are more severely tempted ; some are more lacking in knowledge and understanding. Each brings his own need, but if each brings also his own gift of faith and adds it to the common stock, Christ does not fail the company of His friends.

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The Spirit's distribution of life is discriminating and generous. There is suitable provision for each and all. It will be a great day for mankind when the Church as a whole relearns what it is to worship God together.

The way of truth often leads along a precipice edge. The truth that the Spirit requires the Church for His sphere of action is often distorted into the untruth that His work is wholly mediated to the individual by the Church and that the Church comes in between Christ and the individual believers as the dispenser of His gifts to them. This is another illustration of one of the most persistent and pernicious vagaries of the mind. If the Church can be said to come in between Christ and His believers, it is certainly not to do the work of the Spirit for Him, but to serve as an instrument of the Spirit. There is a sacred spot in every human soul which the Spirit claims as Christ's own trysting-place with the soul, and for any Church to usurp the Redeemer's contact with His redeemed is falsehood and profanity. The Spirit is the supreme and immediate Worker for the salvation of human beings, and the Church which denies that denies to its members the inalienable right of every Christian man to enter the holiest of all through the blood of Christ, and stands in its people's light. The Church is the great instrument of the Spirit, but if it is not a living instrument, if, that is to say, it does not serve to

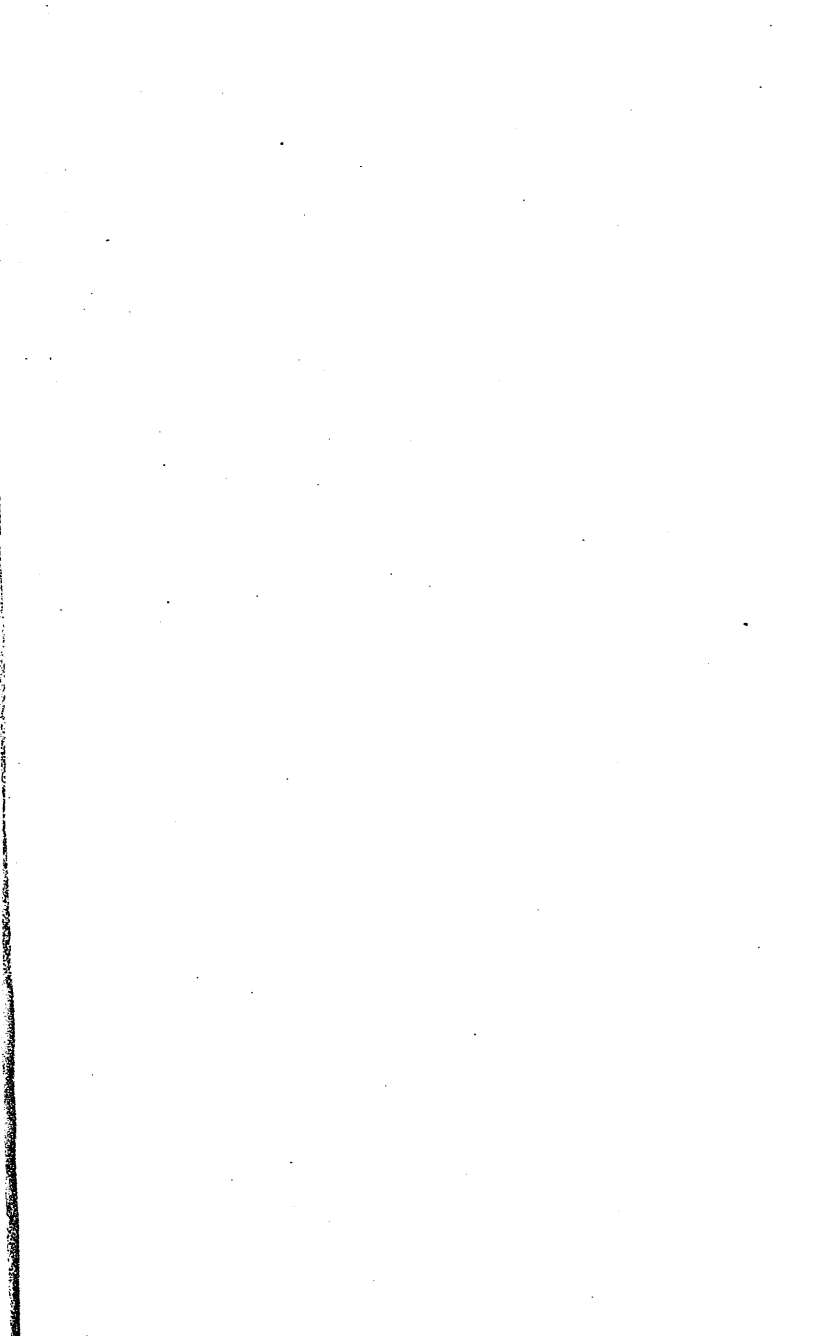
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give the Spirit free course in the lives of men, it has missed its true function and is not the bride of Christ.

The Church has its own place of honour and duty in the work of redemption. It is pledged to stand for Jesus Christ in the midst of a world which as yet shows no signs of acknowledging Him. Were it altogether true to its pledge, standing unanimously for Him as He really is, the world would soon be compelled to make up its mind for or against Him. God speed the day! As it is, the Church is too like the world. And yet, however imperfectly, it provides the society in which souls which have cast anchor within the veil can keep their anchors there and strengthen their hold upon the eternal. The Church is still, as she has always been, the nursing-mother of the saints. She still sends forth to men God's challenge of holy love, the challenge of the Cross, and there are those who respond with rejoicing. One day she will sound forth the challenge more worthily and the world will be moved. Men and nations cannot go on indefinitely feeding their souls on husks. Even now, when the million seem to be consumed by the lust of other things, they know deep down within them that their souls are wrong and that it is the soul that counts. In their vague and blundering way they are waiting for some sure word from the eternal. Such a word is nigh them, and the Spirit calls for the Bride to send it home to their hearts.

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The best thing that any man can do for his fellows is to have a testimony to give them concerning the saving power of Christ, and to tell it out to them in a plain and loving way. Christianity is not the complex of problems which it is often made to appear. The Spirit is not reluctant to give us an understanding in the deep things of God, but the religion of Jesus Christ declines to be understood before it is practised. There is only one way of beginning to practise it, and that is by a simple, child-like faith in the compassion and power of Christ. He who himself possesses such a faith and knows the secret how to pass it on to others is the real benefactor. This is surely among the best gifts which the whole Church should covet. Wherever the Church rises to the height of her task, Christ makes room for Himself in human hearts. She is His Bride in proportion as she serves His Spirit.



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John M. Field

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